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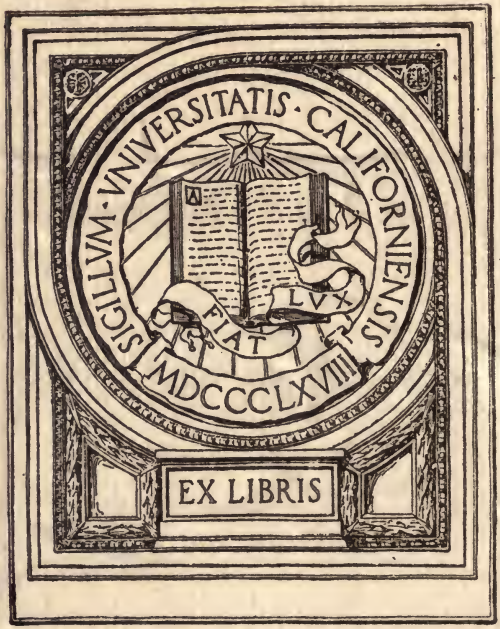

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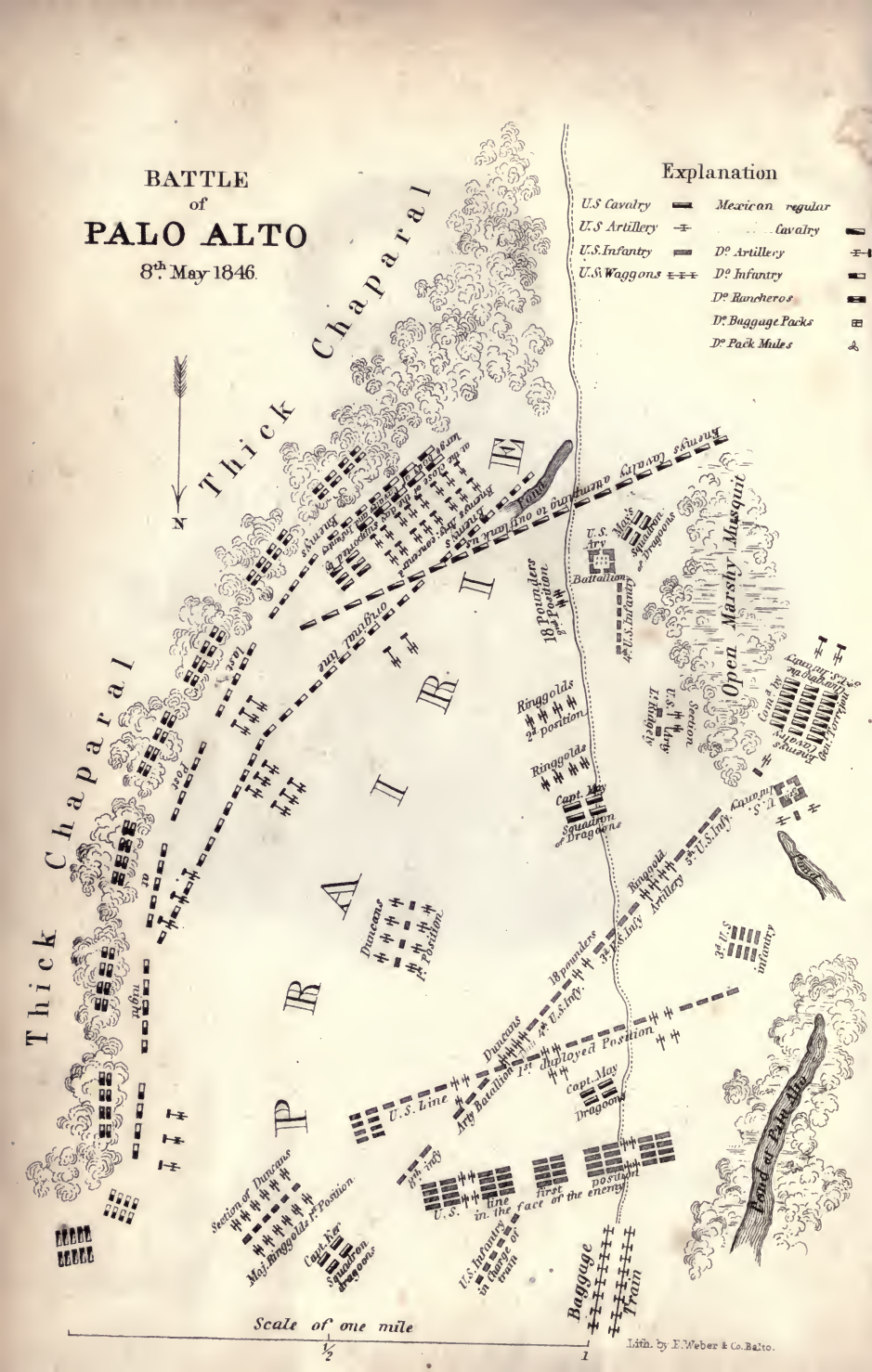
BATTLE
of
PALO ALTO
8th May 1846
Explanation
U.S Cavalry
U.S Artillery
U.S Infantry
U.S Waggons
Mexican regular Cavalry
Do Artillery
Do Infantry
Do Rancheros
Do Baggage Packs
Do Pack Mules
N
Thick Chaparral
Thick Chaparral
Open Marshy Musquit
Ford
Fort
Fort
Fort
Fort
Ringgolds 2d position
Ringgolds 2d position
Capt. May Squadron of Dragoons
Duncans 1st Position
Duncans 2d Position
18 pounders 3d U.S. Inf.
Ringgold Artillery 3d U.S. Inf.
3d U.S. Infantry
U.S. Line
Ary Battalion 1st deployed Position
Capt. May Dragoons
8th Inf.
U.S. Infantry in the line first position
U.S. Infantry in charge of train
Section of Duncans
Maj. Ringgolds 1st Position
Capt. May Squadron Dragoons
Baggage Train
Ford of Palo Alto
Scale of one mile
½
1
Lith. by E. Weber & Co. Balto.

Scale of one mile
½
1
N
Infantry Reserve
Gen.l Arista's
H.d Quart.s
Mexican Rancheros
Thick Chaparal
Thick Chaparal
Thick Chaparal
U.S. Artillery
Right Wing
U.S. Advanced Guard
Left Wing
U.S. Advanced Guard
Capt. C. A. Mc Call 4th Inf.y Comdg
3 U.S. Infantry
3 U.S. Infantry
3 U.S. Infantry
Right Wing
4 U.S. Infantry
left Wing
Train
BATTLE
of
RESACA DE LA PALMA
9th May 1846.
Lith. by E. Weber & Co. Balto.

HISTORY OF THE WAR

BETWEEN

MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES,

WITH A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF ITS ORIGIN;

BY

BRANTZ MAYER,

FORMERLY SECRETARY OF THE UNITED STATES LEGATION IN MEXICO,

AND AUTHOR OF "MEXICO AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS."

Ne dites à la posterité que ce qui est digne de la posterité.—VOLTAIRE.

VOLUME I.

NEW YORK & LONDON.

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BOOK FIRST:

PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE ORIGIN

OF THE WAR.

HISTORY OF THE WAR

BETWEEN

MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory views of Mexico—The people and government.

The war which broke out between the United States of North America and the Mexican Republic, in the spring of 1846, is an event of great importance in the history of the world. Profound peace had reigned among Christian nations, since the downfall of Napoleon; and, with the exception of internal discords in France, Belgium, Poland and Greece, the civilized world had cause to believe that mankind would henceforth resort to the cabinet rather than the field for the settlement of international disputes. The recent conflicts between the French and the Arabs in Algeria, and between the British and Indian races, have been characterized by ferocity and endurance. But, it will be recollected these encounters took place between nations unequal alike in religion, morals, law, and civilization. The temper or character of Mahomedans was not to be measured by that of Christians nor had we just reason to hope for a

pacific or temporizing spirit in people whose savage habits have ever rendered them prompt to return invasion by a blow, and make war the precursor of negotiation. It was, thus, reserved for the Mexicans, whose blood is mixed with that of an Arab ancestry, to exhibit the spectacle of continual domestic broils, and, latterly of a positive warfare against a nation whose friendly hand was the first to summon them into the pale of national independence.

. The disorganized condition of our neighbor for nearly thirty years, may, partly account for and palliate this fault. With administrations shifting like the scenes of a drama, and with a stage, at times dyed with blood, and at others imitating the mimic passions and transports of the real theatre, it may be confessed that much should be pardoned by a forbearing nation whose aggregate intelligence and force are not to be compared with the fragmentary and impulsive usurpations in Mexico. To judge faithfully of the justice or injustice of this war, and to comprehend this history in truth and fairness, we must not only narrate in chronological order the simple events that occurred between the two nations; but the student of this epoch must go back a step in order to master the scope and motives of the war. He must study the preceding Mexican history and character; and, it will speedily be discovered that when he attempts to judge the Spanish republics by the ordinary standards applied to free and enlightened governments, he will signally fail in arriving at truth. He must neither imagine that when the name of Republic was engrafted on the Mexican system, that it accommodated itself at once to our ideal standard of political power, nor that the dominant faction was willing to adopt the simple machinery which operates so perfectly in the United States. There are many reasons why this should not be the case. The Spanish race, although it has achieved

the most wonderful results in discovery, conquest, colonial settlement, diplomacy, feats of arms, and success of domestic power, has proved itself, within the present century, to be one of the few opponents of the progressive principles of our age. A Castilian pride of remembered greatness, and a superstitious reluctance to cast off the bondage of the past, have made the Spaniards content to cling devotedly to their ancient edifice without bestowing on it those repairs or improvements without which governments, must evidently crumble and decay. Spain believed that what had produced national power and greatness in one age must ever continue to effect the same results, and, thus, she was content to bear the evils of the present time rather than disjoint a fragment of her ancient temple, lest the whole should fall in indiscriminate ruin. The blindness of national vanity was made more profound by the universal glare of progressive civilization that surrounded this doomed country, whilst superstitious influences clogged every avenue to progress which might have saved and regenerated both the parent and her colonies.

It may be urged by the apologists for Spain, that, being nearly as deep in moral, political and social degradation as France was at the period of the revolution, she naturally contemplated such an event with horror, especially when she remembered the sensitive and excitable race that peopled her vallies and sierras, and the likelihood that the bloody dramas of Paris would be frightfully exaggerated in Madrid. But I still believe that the true cause will be found more deeply seated, in the nature of the people; and that Spain,—made up as she is of many nations, incompetent for self-government, uneducated and bigoted,—will ever be content to find her ideal future in her traditionary past.

Spain and the Spaniards have few more zealous admirers

than the author of this history. The nation contains individuals who in patriotism, love of liberty, and devotion to science, literature, and art, are unsurpassed by any people of the world. As Americans we owe a debt of gratitude to the noble discoverers and conquerors of this continent. In deeds of bravery, in chivalrous enterprise, and in intellectual power, with what people may they not be matched in their perfect period. But their golden age has passed, and manifold corruptions in church and state have preyed upon the country with paralyzing influence.

For a long time we received from England with the submissive credulity of children, all her traditionary ignorance and abuse of Spain, much of which was owing to political animosity, as well as to the rivalry that grew up between that country and the rest of Europe during the reign of Philip the second. But the study of her language, history and literature, has unveiled the legendary falsehoods with which we were cheated. Whilst a large portion of her past history should be admired and lauded, her present downfall should be regarded with compassionate censure and sympathy. We should endeavor, in writing history, to make ourselves men of the times and nations we describe, and it is in this manner alone, that we can establish the spiritual sympathy between ourselves and foreign countries, which will enable us to enter into their feelings and motives, and thus become not only merciful but true and discreet judges.

The two great impressions made on this continent by the Spaniards were in Mexico and Peru. Avarice and ambition induced the conquest of the latter, while that of Mexico may also be attributed to the same motives, although the hero who added the Aztec empire to the Spanish dominions, modified his victories by personal qualities which were infi-

nitely superior to those of the conqueror of Peru.* Yet, in neither of these great adventures do we find any of the fruits of peaceful acquisition, or of those well regulated advances in civilization which always mark a people whose conquest is undertaken under the immediate direction and legal restraints of government. The conquests in America were, in truth, chiefly individual enterprises, and, of course, could not be conducted in a spirit of temperance and justice. The exploits of Cortéz and Pizarro, especially those of the latter, are characterized by ferocity and barbarism which would place them in the category with freebooters and bucaneers, were they not saved from it by the splendor of their successful results. The Indians of the countries they subjected to Spain, were utterly vanquished; yet, unlike the hardy and warlike aborigines of the north, they remained on their native soil, content to serve or mingle with their conquerors.—Wherever the white man came at the north, the Indian retreated to his congenial wilderness;—he could not inhabit the same country or breathe the same air with the intruder;—but, as the Spaniard advanced at the south, the semi-civilization of the enervated native, induced him to linger near the homes of his ancestors, and, with a tame heart, to obey his conqueror rather than to resist him or enjoy the fierce independence of the forest.

The territory thus seized by violence was held by fear.—Loyalty can never be the tenure of conquerors, and, especially, of the conquerors of an inferior race. The Spaniard and Indian lived together in a spirit of lordly dominion on the one hand, and of crushed dependence on the other, whilst the Castilian derived from the native nothing but his habits of savage life, and the Indian, in turn, learned nothing from the Castilian but his vices.

*See Prescott's Conquest of Peru, 2nd vol. pages 199: 245.

A conquest thus achieved, an empire founded in blood and terror, would naturally seem to have a doubtful destiny. It is unquestionably true that Spain made humane laws, and that Charles the Fifth passed a decree by which his American possessions were declared to be integral parts of the Spanish kingdom. It is true, moreover, that he sought to abolish the special grants to discoverers and conquerors by which they were invested with almost absolute authority; and, by mitigating the system *repartimientos** or of vassalage among the Indians, to raise them to the dignity of Spanish subjects. But, at the same time, these humane laws were badly administered in a country so difficult of access as America was at that period from Spain; and viceroys and governors acted as they pleased, with but little regard to the people or the country, except for their individual interests. Whilst this system of maladministration made the royal and beneficent laws nugatory, Spain seems to have been engaged in creating a colonial system which was calculated to paralyze the energies of Mexico and Peru. She taught them to look exclusively to mining for wealth, and to their Indians for labor. All the laws relative to the

*The word *repartimiento* means, division, partition, distribution, or apportionment. In the old Spanish historians and English books, such as Zaraté, Garcilasso de la Vega, Fernandez, Robertson, it is uniformly used to denote the well known allotment of lands and vassal Indians (*genuine adscripti glebæ*) granted to the first conquerors in reward of their services. In some later writers, this word is applied to the *monopoly of sales to the Indians* exercised by the *corregedores*, under pretext of protecting the Indians from imposition, by the official distribution of goods. N. A. Review, vol. xx. p. 287.

"Indeed the Spanish court made no scruple of regarding the Indians in the same light as the beasts and the soil, disposing of them as the rightful property of the crown; for it was not till 1537, nearly fifty years after the discovery, that the Pope issued a mandate declaring them to be really and truly men,—"*ipsos veros homines*,"—and capable of receiving the Christian faith." N. A. Review, vol. xix. p. 198.

natural development of a new country were disregarded, and civilized existence in America began on artificial principles. The example of the last fifty years has proved that America is capable of producing all the necessaries, and most of the luxuries of life quite as abundantly as Europe. Yet, Spain denied her colonies the privilege of an effort. For instance,—she resolved at the outset not to allow them to be independent in agriculture, commerce or manufactures. She would not permit them to cultivate the soil save for the merest daily necessaries. Wine and oil were to be made in the old world. Cotton and wool were not to be woven into the beautiful fabrics for which the ancient Peruvians were so celebrated. The church aided the strong arm of government by the weight of her exactions and the power of superstitious control. The Inquisition put its veto on the spread of knowledge by restraining the sale and publication of books. Foreigners were not allowed to navigate Spanish seas or enter American harbors. And these distant shores were only visited at stated seasons by national vessels, carrying such produce at exorbitant prices, as Spain might think proper to despatch from Seville or Cadiz.*

I have thought it proper to state in my introductory chapter, thus much of the laws and system under which Mexico began her national existence;—for laws modify the character whenever they are not self-imposed. Let us now, for a moment consider the population which was subjected to the bad administration of such laws; and we shall then understand better the character of the belligerents.

The blood of the Spaniards, even at home, is a mixed

*The American trade was confined to Seville until 1720, when it was removed to Cadiz, as a more convenient port. On the subject of these oppressions and misgovernment, see Zavala's "Revoluciones de Mexico," Introduction;—and North American Review. vol. xx. p. 158.

blood. But when we remember the various races that have overrun, resided in, ruled, and incorporated themselves with Spain, we cannot be surprised at detecting so many and diverse characteristics in Mexico. The Celti-gallic, Celt-Iberian, Carthagenian, Roman, Vandalic, Visigothic, and Moorish blood have mingled again in Mexico and Peru with the Indian, and in some cases have been dashed even with the Negro.* Mexicans are thus, as I have observed else-

*The subjoined list shows the varieties of parentage and blood forming the castes throughout Spanish America:

	Parents.		Children.
1. Original races.....	White...	European *whites* are called *gachupines* or [chapetones.	
	Negro.	*Whites*, born in the colonies, are called creoles.	
	Indian.		
2. Castes of White race.	White father and Negro mother		Mulatto.
	White " "	Indian "	Mestizo.
	White " "	Mulatta "	Quarteron.
	White " "	Meztiza "	Creole, (only distinguishable from the white by a pale brown complexion.)
	White " "	China "	Chino-blanco.
	White " "	Quarterona	Quintero.
	White " "	Quintera "	White.
3. Castes of Negro race.	Negro father and Mulatta mother		Zambo-negro.
	Negro " "	Meztiza "	Mulatto-oscuro.
	Negro " "	China "	Zambo-chino.
	Negro " "	Zamba "	Zambo & Negro (perfectly black.)
	Negro " "	Quarterona or Quintera	dark Mulatto.
4. Castes of Indian race.	Indian father and Negro mother		Chino.
	Indian " "	Mulatta "	Chino-oscuro.
	Indian " "	Mestiza "	Mestizo-claro (often very beautiful.)
	Indian " "	China "	Chino-cholo.
	Indian " "	Zamba "	Zambo-claro.
	Indian " "	China-chola	Indian (with short-frizzly hair.)
	Indian " "	Quarterona or Quintera	brown Meztizo.
5. Mulatto corruptions.	Mulatto father and Zamba mother		Zambo (a miserable race.)
	Mulatto " "	Zamba "	Chino (rather clear race.)
	Mulatto " "	China "	Chino (rather dark.)

Besides these specified castes there are many others not distinguished by particular names. The best criterion for judging is the hair of the women

where, grafts rather of the wild Arab on the American Indian, than of the Spanish Don on the noble Aztec.*

When Mexico was completely conquered and emigration began to fill up the land, the soil was divided, in large estates, among the adventurers and the Indians, by a system of *repartiamentos*, were apportioned to the land holders.† This created an absolute vassalage, and bound the Indian, virtually and forever, to the spot where he was born. As it became wearisome to the planters to dwell in the seclusion of these vast and lonely estates, they left them and their Indians to the care of an *administrador*, and retreated to the chief cities of the provinces or to the capital. Thus all the intelligence and cultivation of Mexico became compacted in the towns, whilst the original ignorance and semi-civilization remained diffused over the country. It is, therefore, not at all surprising to find that out of a population of seven millions, four millions are Indians and only one million purely white, while more than two millions, of the rest, are zambos, mestizos and mulattos. Nor is it singular that of this whole population of seven millions, not more than six hundred thousand whites and eighty thousand of other castes, can read and write.‡

Indeed it may be said with truth,—as agriculture has received but little attention beyond the ordinary wants of life,

which is infinitely less deceiving than the complexion. The short woolly hair, or the coarse Indian locks may always be detected on the head or back of the neck. This tabular statement exhibits at a glance the mongrel corruptions of the human race in Spanish America, and forms an interesting subject for students of physiology. See Tschudi's Peru, p. 80, Am. Ed.

*Preface to 3d Ed. of Mexico as it was and as it is, p. 12.

†Zavala's "Revoluciones de Mexico," vol. 1. p. 15, gives an account of the manner in which estates are divided in Mexico.

‡See Mexico as it was and as it is, p. 301.

and as the great proprietors of estates have chiefly devoted their attention to *the raising of cattle*,—that the ancient nomadic habits of the Indian and half-breed, have remained unchanged, and, consequently, that the great body of this semi-civilized people is quite as much at home on horseback with sword and lance as in the *corral* or *hacienda.**

The RANCHERO, who has played so conspicuous a part in this war, is the natural offspring of such a state of society. This class of men is composed of individuals, half Spanish half Indian, who resemble the *gauchos* of the South American Pampas. Gaunt, shrivelled and bronzed by exposure, though hardy and muscular from athletic exercise, they are, indeed, the Arabs of our continent. Living half the time in their saddles, for they are matchless horsemen, they traverse the plains and mountains, with lasso† in hand, either searching for, or tending their herds. The slaughter of beasts and preparation and sale of hides is their chief means of livelihood, varied occasionally by the cultivation of a small patch of ground, or by taking part in the civil wars that are always waging. Their costume generally consists of a pair of tough leggings of skin and leathern trousers, over which is a *serape* or blanket, with a hole in the centre large enough for the head to pass through, whence it falls in graceful folds over the chest and shoulders, leaving room for the play of hands and arms. Add to this a broad *sombrero*, and the *lasso*, hanging ready for use at his saddle bow, and the reader will have

* *Corral* signifies cattle yard; *hacienda*, plantation; *rancho*, small farm.

† *The lasso* is a long rope, with a running noose at the end of it. The Mexicans learn to fling this with great accuracy so as to catch a bull, a horse, or a man with equal facility. All classes have some skill in the use of this weapon, and I have seen children, with cords, attempting to *lasso* chickens and even butterflies!

a picture of the *ranchero* as he appears in peace or in the ordinary pursuit of his occupation. Join to this garb a long sabre, a horse as savage and untamed as himself, and a belt plentifully studded with pistols and *machetes*, and the *ranchero* presents himself ready either to join a troop of banditti, or to serve in a body of cavalry.

Cowardly as they generally are in the open field when encountering regular troops, yet, in ambuscade, a sudden fight, or, as *guerillas*, they are both a formidable and cruel foe. Their power of endurance is inexhaustible. Fatigue is almost unknown to them, and a scanty meal, each day, of jerked beef and corn or plantain, is sufficient to sustain them on the longest marches.

Such are the *rancheros*, who, by discipline, might be rendered the best light troops in the world. These are the men who form the material of the Mexican cavalry; and they bear the same relation to the armies of that republic that the Cossacks do to the Russians;—ever on the alert,—easily lodged,—capable of supporting fatigue or hunger,—and untiring in pursuit of an enemy, when even the most trifling plunder is to be obtained.*

Another large and formidable body in Mexico is that of the *Indians*, amounting, as we have seen, to four millions; whose knowledge of their governors' language is generally confined to such phrases as will enable them to buy and sell, or perform the ordinary functions of life. Formerly they lived, and usually still live, in narrow huts built of mud, thatched with straw or palm leaves, and which have scarcely the merit of being picturesque. In these miserable lairs, they nestle with their families, their domestic animals, and a table or altar on which they erect a cross or place the figure of

*See Head's Rough Notes of a Journey over the Pampas. The Mexican ranchero is somewhat superior to the *gaucho* of the Pampas.

a patron saint. Their food is mostly maize, and their dress corresponds with this grovelling wretchedness. Five out of every hundred may perhaps possess two suits of clothes, but their general vesture consists of a large cotton shirt, a pair of leatheren trousers, and a blanket. Even the Indian women, who elsewhere, like their sex in civilized countries, are always fond of personal adornment, exhibit no desire to appear decent or to rival each other in tasteful ornaments when they go abroad. They are as foul and ill-clad on their festivals at church, as in their hovels at home, so that few things are more disgusting to a foreigner than to mingle in an Indian crowd.* It is impossible to imagine such a population capable of becoming landed proprietors; and, consequently, we find them contented with the annual product of their small fields, amounting, perhaps, to thirty or fifty *fanegas* of corn. When they live on the large estates of Mexican proprietors, they are, in reality, vassals, although free from the nominal stain of slavery.† On these plantations they are beaten when they commit faults, and, if then found incorrigible, are driven beyond their limits,—a punishment deemed by them the severest that can be inflicted, and which they bear with as much difficulty as our Indians do their banishment from the "hunting grounds" of their forefathers. When they have gained a little money by labor, they hasten to squander it by making a festival in honor of their favorite saint, and thus consume their miserable earnings in gluttony, gambling, masses, fire works, and drunkenness. When it is not absolutely necessary to toil for the necessaries of life,—especially in the *tierras calientes*, or warmer portions of Mexico,—they pass their time

*Mexico as it was and is, p. 144.

†Id. p. 201; and see Stephens' Travels in Yucatan,—where, he says, the maxim is that "los Indios no oyen sino por las nalgas,"—the Indians only hear through their backs.

in utter idleness or sleep. Zavala declares that in many portions of the country, the *curates* maintain such entire dominion over the Indians, that they order them to be publicly whipped whenever they fail to pay their *ovenciones*, or tributes, at the regular time, or commit some act of personal disobedience. But the degradation of this class does not stop even here, for the same author alleges that he has frequently seen many Indians and their wives flogged at the village church door, because they had failed to come to mass upon some Sunday or festival, whilst, after the punishment, these wretches were obliged to kiss the hand of the executioner! *

It will be seen from this sketch and description that the vicious colonial system of Spain formed only two great classes in America,—the proprietor and the vassal,—and that, in the nature of things, it was utterly impossible for the latter to amalgamate with the former except by creating an inferior race, whose sympathies were with the Indian rather than the Spaniard, and whose type is the nomadic *ranchero*. This fact was proved in the revolution which broke out in Spanish America. The war cry was against the Spaniard† and his

*Zavala Revoluciones de Mejico, vol. i, pp. 15, 16. "Este escandalo estaba autorizado por la costumbre de mi provincia." Zavala was one of the wisest and most illustrious patriots of Mexico. His History was published in Paris in 1831.

†It will be recollected that the outburst of the Mexican revolution was not in favor of republicanism; but only against misgovernment. It was not against the *form* of rule, but against the *men* who ruled. Even the plan of Iguala offered the crown of Mexico to Ferdinand, as a separate kingdom. See Robinson's Memoirs of the Mexican Revolution.

"It is related that Hidalgo, the celebrated priestly leader of the revolutionary movement, was accustomed to travel from village to village preaching a crusade against the Spaniards, exciting the *creoles* and Indians; and one of his most effective tricks is said to have been the following. Although he had thrown off the cassock for the military coat, he wore a figure of the Virgin Mary suspended by a chain around his neck. After harangu-

pure descendants. The *creole** rose against the *gachupin*,† and the ferocity with which the soldiers of old Spain carried on the war against the natives confirmed their hereditary animosity.

The struggle for domestic power commenced as soon as the independence of Mexico was achieved, and the people began to establish a system of government upon a republican basis after the downfall of the Emperor Iturbidé. The Spaniards had taught a lesson of privileged classes which was never forgotten; so that, when the revolution took place, THE PEOPLE were only used to effect national emancipation rather than to establish general political liberty.

The nobles or great proprietors, and the clergy, had, in the olden time, formed the influential class of society which ruled the land. The theory of republicanism was marvellously

ing the mob on such occasions, he would suddenly break off, and looking down at his breast, address himself to the holy image, after the following fashion: 'Mary! Mother of God! Holy Virgin! Patron of Mexico! behold our country,—behold our wrongs,—behold our sufferings! Dost thou not wish they should be changed? that we should be delivered from our tyrants? that we should be free? that we should slay the *gachupines!* that we should kill the Spaniards?'

"The image had a moveable head fastened to a spring, which he jerked by a cord concealed beneath his coat, and, of course the Virgin responded with a *nod!* The effect was surprising—and the air was filled with Indian shouts of obedience to the present *miracle.*"—*Mexico as it was and as it is*, p. 230.

*The term *creole* is a corruption of the Spanish word *criollo*, which is derived from *criar*, to create or foster. The Spaniards apply the term criollo not merely to the human race, but to animals born in the colonies, if they are of *pure European blood.*

†See Robinson's Memoirs Mexican Revolution, page 15. The term *gachupin* has been always used by the creoles and Indians as a word of contempt towards the Spaniards. Its origin and exact signification are unknown; but it is believed to be an Indian, and perhaps Aztec, term of scorn and opprobrium.

captivating so long as there was an European foe to subdue. But, when the last remnant of Spanish power disappeared, the men who had governed during the revolution were loath to surrender power and subside into the insignificance of mere citizenship. In such a country as Mexico, and in such a war as had just occurred, this controlling influence in public affairs was, of course, to be chiefly found in the army; so that when the nation looked around for men to direct her at a period when Spain had not yet recognized her independence and might again assail her, she naturally turned to the military chieftains whose valor sustained her cause so bravely. Thus it was that in her first moments of peace, the army obtained an important ascendancy, which it has ever since contrived to retain during all administrations.

It is not just to the Spanish colonies to blame them for such a procedure, especially when we remember that even our republic is beginning to manifest a marked partiality for military men. The great deed rather than the great thought, —the brilliant act rather than beneficent legislation,—arrests and captivates the multitude. In republics, where an eager strife for wealth, distinction or power, is constantly going on, the notice and position that each man obtains must be won either by intrigue or by the irresistible power of talents and achievements. Ambitious parties sometimes even compromise for the weakest, rather than yield the palm to superior merit of which they are meanly jealous. The great mass of the country has no time to pause in the midst of its earnest labor to meditate wisely on the political abilities and moral claims of individuals. They cannot weigh them in the golden scales of justice;—but, by a more rapid and easy process, they yield their suffrages promptly to those whose manifestations of genius or power are so resistless as to compel admiration. Thus is it that the brave soldier, performing his

noble exploit on the field of battle, speaks palpably to the eye and ear of the greedy multitude. His is, indeed, the language of action, and each new deed makes national glory more distinct, and national vanity more confident. But the more quiet and unobtrusive statesman, with a field infinitely less glaring or attractive, exacts from his judges a suspension of party feeling, an investigation of motive and merit, a calm and forbearing justice, which the impatient masses have seldom the time or talent to bestow. It is, therefore, by no means surprising to find in history, that the sword has commonly been mightier than the pen, and that military chieftains become the natural heads of republics which are created by long and bitter revolutions.

It must be remembered that the army in Mexico is not what armies are generally understood to be in other countries. In Europe they are designed to restrain the aggressive ambition of rival powers, to act as military police, and, by their imposing skill, discipline and numbers, to preserve the balance of national power. But in Mexico, whilst the members of an immensely rich hierarchy constitute a distinct *order* in society, the army forms another.—The policy of the existing military chieftains was to sustain, foster and increase their individual power and patronage. The mere domestic police of the country could surely never require, in time of peace, so large a numerical force under arms as that which has always been supported in it; yet the military presidents, at once, sought to establish an *army of officers*, and by the enlistment of a body of commanders, entirely disproportionate to the number of rank and file, they immediately created a *military order* upon whose support they could rely so long as they possessed the means of patronage. The officers thus became armed and paid politicians, whilst the common soldiers formed a military police;—the one an ele-

ment of all political revolutions, the other a tool by which those revolutions were effected. The great practical idea of government, it will be perceived, was derived from *compulsory force.* The church wielded the spiritual power, whilst the army held the physical; and, between the two, *the people,*—composed of merchants, professional men, farmers, proprietors, and artisans,—were refused all participation in authority, or progress in civil order which might have placed Mexico among the foremost nations of the world. In this manner a central despot has always found means and instruments to suppress federalism;—for whilst near *thirty* revolutions have occurred in Mexico since her independence, every one of her presidents has been a military chieftain.*

Macaulay, in his essay on the life of Lord Bacon describes the condition of England when she was governed by warriors whose rude courage was neither guided by science nor softened by humanity, and by priests whose learning and abilities were habitually devoted to the defence of power. The description of that age in England is by no means inapplicable to Mexico in the nineteenth century. "On the one side," says he, "the Hotspurs, the Nevilles, the Cliffords, rough illiterate and unreflecting, brought to the council-board the fierce and impetuous despotism which they had acquired amid the tumult of predatory war or in the gloomy repose of the garrisoned and moated castle. On the other side was the calm and placid prelate, versed in all that was considered as learning; trained in the schools to manage words, and, in the Confessional, to manage hearts;—seldom superstitious, but skilful in practising on the superstitions of others; false as it was natural for a man to be whose pro-

* A *federal* government, similar to our own, was established in Mexico in 1824, and overthrown in 1835, to yield to a *central* constitution. In the meanwhile, the centralists were almost always at war, openly or secretly, against the *federalists.*

fession imposed on all who were not saints the necessity of being hypocrites;—selfish as it was natural that a man should be who could form no domestic ties and cherish no hope of legitimate posterity;—more attached to his order than to his country, and guiding the politics of England with a constant side glance to Rome."*

And so it was in Mexico. The sojourner in her capital is continually warned of this double dominion over the soul and body of the people. The drum and the bell resound in his ears from morning to night fall. Priests and soldiers throng the streets; and, whilst the former enjoy the comfortable revenues which are derived from the one hundred millions of property owned by the church, the latter live upon the labor of the people, whom they are paid to control and transfer from one military despot to another.

The Mexican revolution,—like the revolutions of England, but unlike that of France,—was political rather than social. The great foundations of society were therefore undisturbed, and the priest and soldier took the ranks of the ancient privileged classes, whilst the mixed people and the native Indians remained what they had ever been—the subjects of government.

Of all the officers who have commanded the army and enjoyed the presidency, Santa Anna has occupied the most distinguished position since the death of Iturbidé, and it is with him and the nation thus described, that we shall deal in the following pages.

* Macaulay's Essays, vol. 2d, p. 356, Bost. Ed.

CHAPTER II.

Origin of the war considered—True objects of contemporaneous history—Motives for war—No single act caused it—Difference between war and hostilities—Mexican revolution—Federalism and Centralism—Operation of the Constitution of 1824—History of our commercial and diplomatic relations—Bad conduct of Mexico in regard to our claims, compared with that of other nations—Commission—Award of umpire—Subsequent course of Mexico—History of the seizure and surrender of Monterey, on the Pacific, by Commodore Jones in 1842—Secretary Upshur's censure of his conduct—Ill feeling in Mexico towards the United States in consequence of this seizure.

An artist in portraying a face or delineating a landscape, does not imprint upon his canvass, each line and wrinkle, each blade of grass or mossy stone, yet a spectator recognizes in the complete painting, those broad characteristics of truth which establish a limner's fidelity. So it is with the historian. Whilst seeking for accuracy in all his details, he aims, chiefly, at exactness in his ruling principles and general effect, but he leaves the minute inelegances and tasteless incidents to those whose critical fervor delights in detecting them.

It is not alone in the detail of facts that the historian is liable to incur censure, especially when he writes a contemporaneous narrative. It is almost impossible to suppose that he will divest himself so completely of party feeling, as to compose an unprejudiced work. Some critics have even declared that a historian should possess neither religion nor

country, and would thus force us to believe it utterly impossible to be impartial unless an author were an infidel or a cosmopolite.

The age is so characterized by political rancor and so little by true statesmanship, that it is not surprising to hear such opinions even from experienced and patient scholars. Yet I have always thought that a writer who undertakes the task of delineating national annals in no sectarian spirit but with broad and christian tolerance,—honestly seeking to do justice in politics and religion to all,—may so far separate himself from the strifes of the day as to pronounce opinions as honest, though perhaps not as learned, as those that issue from the bench.

There is, too, a great advantage which should not escape our notice in recording contemporaneous history and fixing permanently the facts of the time as they occur. He who describes events or periods long since past, is forced to throw himself back, if possible, into the scenes of which he writes, whilst he remains free from sympathy with their factions and parties. But if a writer of the present day will place himself on the impartial ground of religious and political freedom, and make himself what Madame de Stael has so felitously styled "contemporaneous posterity," I think he will be better able than those who come after us to narrate with vivid freshness the story of this sanguinary war.

The impression of public feeling both in Mexico and the United States is still distinct in our recollection; the political motives influencing or controlling both the great parties in our country, have not yet ceased to operate; and the errors that may innocently creep into a narrative may be corrected by intelligent men who took part in the war as soldiers or civilians. A history thus dispassionately written, must, it seems to me, have the truth and value of a portrait

taken from life, rather than of a sketch made from memory whose coloring lacks all the freshness of vitality.

The very threshold of this history is embarrassed by the party controversies to which I have alluded. The origin of the war was attributed by the president and his adherents to the wrong doings of Mexico, whilst the opponents of the executive did not hesitate to charge its unnecessary inception and all its errors directly on the cabinet. Documents, messages, speeches, essays, and reviews, were published to sustain both sides of the question, and the whole subject was argued with so much ability and bitterness, so much zeal and apparent sincerity, that an impartial mind experiences extraordinary difficulty in detecting the actual offender. That grievances existed in the conduct of Mexico against us during a long series of years cannot be denied; but, it is equally true, that, between governments well administered and entirely reasonable on both sides, none of those provocations justified war. Yet, when offended power on one side, and passion on the other, become engaged in discussion, it requires but little to fan the smallest spark into a flame, and thus to kindle a conflagration, which the stoutest arms may fail to suppress. It frequently occurs in the affairs of ordinary life, that neighbors are the bitterest enemies. Men often dislike each other at their first interview, especially if they belong to families in which mutual prejudices have existed. They find it impossible to assign reasons for their aversion; nevertheless it exists in all its marvellous virulence. A slight disagreement as to limits between neighboring landholders, a paltry quarrel among servants, the malicious representation of innocent remarks, a thousand vain and trifling incidents, may effectually create a degree of ill feeling and cause them never to meet without scornful

looks and quickened pulses. At length, this offensive temper is manifested in personal annoyance or insulting language, and blows are struck in the first encounter without pausing to debate the justice of an assault. It is with nations as it is with persons. The boasted discretion of statesmen, and the provident temper of politicians have, in all ages, failed to control the animosity of mankind; and we thus find as much littleness in the conduct of governments as in the petulance of men.

I have therefore, in studying this subject carefully, been led to the opinion that no single act or cause can be truly said to have originated the war between the United States and Mexico; but that it occurred as the result of a series of events, and as the necessary consequence of the acts, position, temper, passions, ambition and history of both parties since our international relations commenced.

The reader will observe that I draw a distinction between the *war* and *hostilities*. I shall discuss the latter question in the portion of this volume which relates to events on the Rio Grande.*

In the preceding chapter I have glanced at the character of the people of Mexico, and I trust that the sketch I gave will be continually remembered as illustrating the people with whom we are dealing. When our first envoy, Mr. Poinsett, was despatched, he found Mexico pausing to recover breath after her revolution. The bad government of Spain had been followed by the turmoil and bloodshed of the rebellion, and that, in turn, was succeeded by the anarchy of a distracted republic. Revolution has followed revolution so rapidly since then, that the historian, at a loss to discover

*This river is known by various names in different authors. By some it is called Rio Bravo, by others, Rio del Norte, and by others, again, Rio Grande. I shall adhere to the latter throughout this work.

their causes, can scarcely detect their pretexts. For twenty years past we have been so accustomed to hear of a new military outbreak in Mexico that the familiarized act seems to be only the legitimate order of constitutional change. Passion, ambition, turbulence, avarice, and superstition, have so devoured the country, that during the whole of this period, Mexico, whilst presenting to foreign nations, the external appearance of nationality, has, in fact, at home, scarcely ever enjoyed the benefit of a real or stable government that could make an impression upon the character of the people or their rulers. It is true that, at first, she sought to adopt our federal system; but the original difference between the colonial condition of things in the two countries, made the operation of it almost impossible. The British provinces of North America, with their ancient and separate governments, very naturally united in a federation for national purposes, whilst they retained their freedom and laws as independent States. But the viceroyalty of Mexico, when it revolutionized its government, was forced to reverse our system,—to destroy the original central power, and, subsequently to divide the territory into departments, or states. Until the year 1824, nothing of this kind existed in Mexico. The whole country from the Sabine to its utmost southern limit, was under the central rule of a viceroy, with the same laws, religion, priests, judges, and civil as well as military authorities. The constitution of 1824, for the first time broke up the consolidated nation into nineteen states, and then, by the same legislative act, recomposed them in a federative union. The constitutions of these nineteen states, consequently, were creative of differences that never existed before, and the unity of power, will, and action, which previously existed was destroyed forever. This was, naturally the origin of jealousies, parties, and sectional feeling;

and the result was, that the revenues of the country became wasted whilst their collection was impeded, and that a people unused to freedom and chiefly composed of illiterate *creoles*, were confounded by a scheme of government whose machinery was too intricate.*

The state and municipal governments of Mexico were, consequently, always quite as incompetent for self-rule as the central authority. In addition to this, they were cordially jealous of the national powers. This arose from the state-fears of consolidation; and, as it was with these municipal authorities, as well as with the corrupt government officers, that our citizens were chiefly brought in contact in the ports, it is not at all wonderful to find them soon complaining of oppression and burthening the records of our legation with their grievances. When our ministers sought to obtain redress, the Mexican government was reluctant to undertake the investigation of the subject; and, when it did so, continually encountered delay and equivocation on the part of the local authorities. The distant peculator was anxious to escape the penalty of his fault by procrastination, and the Mexican secretary of state, ever willing to uphold his national pride by concealing or not confessing the villainy of his subordinate, was ready to sustain him by an interminable correspondence.

The history of the diplomatic and commercial relations between the United States and Mexico, as exhibited by congress in all the published volumes of national documents, presents a series of wrongs, which the reader will find ably recapitulated in a report† made by Mr. Cushing in the year 1842. Our claims, arising from injuries inflicted by Mexico,

*See the Natchez Daily Courier of 18th January, 1843, for an excellent article on Mexico, signed Ego et Alter.

†Report No. 1096 to the H. of R., 27th congress, 2d session.

were no ordinary demands founded on mere querulousness, or contrived with a view to obtain money fraudulently from that republic. They were brought to the notice of the ministry of foreign affairs by all our envoys, and their justice urged with ample proof; until, at length, upon the return of Mr. Powhatan Ellis to the United States, in the year 1837, after demanding his passports, they became the subject of a message from President Jackson in which he alleges that all his efforts of pacific negotiation had been fruitless and that he found it both just and prudent to recommend reprisals against Mexico. This serious aspect of our difficulties immediately commended the subject to the notice of committees in both houses of congress, and whilst they sustained the president's opinion of the character of our wrongs, they recommended that a forbearing spirit should still characterize our conduct, so that, "after a further demand, should prompt justice be refused by the Mexican government, we might appeal to all nations not only for the equity and moderation with which we had acted towards a sister republic but for the necessity which will then compel us to seek redress for our wrongs either by actual war or reprisals."*

"Shortly after these proceedings"—says President Polk—"a special messenger was despatched to Mexico, to make a final demand for redress; and on the 20th of July, 1837, the demand was made. The reply of the Mexican government bears date on the 29th of the same month, and contains assurances of the anxious wish of the Mexican government 'not to delay the moment of that final and equitable adjustment which is to terminate the existing difficulties between the two governments;' that nothing 'should be left undone which may contribute to the speediest and most equitable ter-

*See senate documents of that session.

mination of the subjects which have so seriously engaged the attention of the United States,' that the 'Mexican government would adopt, as the only guides for its conduct, the plainest principles of public right, the sacred obligations imposed by international law, and the religious faith of treaties,' and that 'whatever reason and justice may dictate respecting each case will be done.' The assurance was further given that the decision of the Mexican government upon each cause of complaint, for which redress had been demanded, should be communicated to the government of the United States by the Mexican minister at Washington.

"These solemn assurances, in answer to our demand for redress, were disregarded. By making them, however, Mexico obtained further delay. President Van Buren, in his annual message to congress of the 5th of December, 1837, states that 'although the larger number' of our demands for redress, and 'many of them aggravated cases of personal wrongs, have been now for years before the Mexican government, and although the causes of national complaint, and those of the most offensive character, admitted of immediate, simple, and satisfactory replies, it is only within a few days past that any specific communication in answer to our last demand, made five months ago, has been received from the Mexican minister;' and that 'for not one of our public complaints has satisfaction been given or offered; that but one of the cases of personal wrong has been favorably considered, and but four cases of both descriptions, out of all those formally presented, and earnestly pressed, have as yet been decided upon by the Mexican government.' President Van Buren, believing that it would be vain to make any further attempt to obtain redress by the ordinary means within the power of the executive, communicated this opinion to congress, in the message referred to, in which he said that

'on a careful and deliberate examination of the contents,' of the correspondence with the Mexican government, 'and considering the spirit manifested by the Mexican government, it became his painful duty to return the subject, as it now stands, to congress, to whom it belongs, to decide upon the time, the mode, and the measure of redress.'

"Instead of taking redress into our own hands, a new negotiation was entered upon with fair promises on the part of Mexico. This negotiation, after more than a year's delay, resulted in the convention of the 11th of April, 1839, 'for the adjustment of claims of citizens of the United States of America upon the government of the Mexican republic.' The joint board of commissioners created by this convention to examine and decide upon these claims was not organized until the month of August, 1840, and under the terms of the convention they were to terminate their duties within eighteen months from that time. Four of the eighteen months were consumed in preliminary discussions on frivolous and dilatory points raised by the Mexican commissioners; nor was it until the month of December, 1840, that they commenced the examination of the claims of our citizens upon Mexico. Fourteen months only remained to examine and decide upon these numerous and complicated cases. In the month of February, 1842, the term of the commission expired, leaving many claims undisposed of for want of time. The claims which were allowed by the board and by the umpire, authorized by the convention to decide in case of disagreement between the Mexican and American commissioners, amounted to *two millions twenty-six thousand one hundred and thirty-nine dollars and sixty-eight cents.* There were pending before the umpire when the commission expired additional claims which had been examined and awarded by the American commissioners, and had not

been allowed by the Mexican commissioners, amounting to *nine hundred and twenty-eight thousand and twenty-seven dollars and eighty-eight cents*, upon which he did not decide, alleging that his authority ceased with the termination of the joint commission. Besides these claims, there were others of American citizens amounting to *three millions three hundred and thirty-six thousand eight hundred and thirty-seven dollars and five cents*, which had been submitted to the board, and upon which they had not time to decide before their final adjournment.

"The sum of two millions twenty-six thousand one hundred and thirty-nine dollars and sixty-eight cents which had been awarded to the claimants, was an ascertained debt by Mexico, about which there could be no dispute, and which she was bound to pay according to the terms of the convention. Soon after the final awards for this amount had been made, the Mexican government asked for a postponement of the time of making payment, alleging that it would be inconvenient to pay at the time stipulated. In the spirit of forbearing kindness towards a sister republic, which Mexico has so long abused, the United States promptly complied with her request. A second convention was accordingly concluded between the two governments on the thirtieth of January, 1843, which upon its face declares, that, 'this new arrangement is entered into for the accommodation of Mexico.' By the terms of this convention, all the interest due on the awards which had been made in favor of the claimants under the convention of the 11th of April, 1839, was to be paid to them on the 30th of April, 1843, and "the principal of the said awards, and the interest accruing thereon," was stipulated to "be paid in five years, in equal instalments every three months." Notwithstanding this new convention was entered into at the request of Mexico, and for

the purpose of relieving her from embarrassment, the claimants only received the interest due on the 30th of April, 1843, and three of the twenty instalments. Although the payments of the sum thus liquidated, and confessedly due by Mexico to our citizens as indemnity for acknowledged acts of outrage and wrong, was secured by treaty, the obligations of which are ever held sacred by all just nations, yet Mexico violated this solemn engagement by failing and refusing to make the payment. The two instalments due in April and July, 1844, under the peculiar circumstances connected with them, were assumed by the United States and paid to the claimants. But this is not all of which we have just cause of complaint. To provide a remedy for the claimants whose cases were not decided by the joint commission under the convention of April the 11th, 1839, it was expressly stipulated by the sixth article of the convention of the 30th of January, 1843, that 'a new convention shall be entered into for the settlement of all claims of the government and citizens of the United States against the republic of Mexico which were not finally decided by the late commission which met in the city of Washington, and all claims of the government and citizens of Mexico against the United States.'

"In conformity with this stipulation, a third convention was concluded and signed at the city of Mexico on the 20th of November, 1843, by the plenipotentiaries of the two governments, by which provision was made for ascertaining and paying these claims. In January, 1844, this convention was ratified by the senate of the United States, with two amendments, which were manifestly reasonable in their character.

"Upon a reference of the amendments proposed to the government of Mexico, the same evasions, difficulties, and

delays were interposed which have so long marked the policy with that government towards the United States. It has not even yet decided whether it would or would not accede to them, although the subject has been repeatedly pressed upon its consideration.

"Mexico thus violated a second time the faith of treaties, by failing or refusing to carry into effect the sixth article of convention of January, 1843."*

The allegations made in this message are unquestionable. They rest upon the evidence of documents which are accessible to all in the published papers of the government.† The outrages of Mexico consisted in seizure of property, illegal imprisonment of citizens, deprivation of just rights, interference with our lawful commerce, forced loans, violations of contracts, and arbitrary expulsion from the territory without trial. All these misdeeds formed the exasperating burthen of our complaint, and their perpetration was in fact proved beyond the possibility of cavil by the awards in favor of our claimants made by the Baron von Roenne, who, as Prussian minister, was umpire between the Mexican and American commissioners.

It must not be forgotten that we had claims also against Spain, France, England, Denmark and Naples, which were adjusted by negotiation and liquidated in strict accordance with treaties. These, demands, however, originated during the wars in Europe which followed the French revolution, so that it remained for Mexico to peculate on our

* President Polk's annual message to congress, 8th Dec. 1846, p. 6.

† See Doc. No. 139, 24 cong. 2d sess. H. of R.—Senate Doc. No. 320, 2d sess. 27 cong.—Doc. No. 57, H. of R. 27 cong. 1st sess.—Senate Doc. No. 411, 27 cong. 2d sess.—Doc. No. 1096, H. of R. 27 cong. 2d sess.—Doc. No. 158, H. of R. 28 cong. 2d sess.—Doc. No. 144, H. of R. 28 cong. 2d sess.—Senate Doc. No. 85, 29 cong. 1st sess.—Senate Doc. No. 151, 29 cong. 1 sess.

commerce and persecute our people during a period of entire international peace, and without any excuse save the direct villainy of her government, or the corrupt ignorance of her subordinate officers.

We must now retrace our steps, in order to narrate an event of interest in the series of causes that originated this war.

It appears that the Mexican government, in anticipation of some attack on its distant territories of California, had, in the summer of 1842, sent a number of troops thither, under the command of Don Manuel Micheltorena, who was appointed commandant general and inspector of both the Californias. These troops arrived at San Diego, the southernmost port on the Pacific side of California, in the middle of October, and were on their way to Monterey, the capital, when the occurrences in question took place.

Monterey, on the Pacific, is a small village founded by the Spaniards in 1771, at the southern extremity of a bay of the same name, near the 36th degree of latitude, about a hundred miles south of the great bay of San Francisco, and about three hundred and fifty miles north from the town of Angeles, where the Commandant Micheltorena was resting with his troops when the events in question occurred.

Whilst Commodore Jones was visiting the port of Callao, in September, 1842, he received from Mr. John Parrott, our consul at Mazatlan, a copy of a Mexican newspaper of the 4th of June, containing three official declarations against the United States," which he regarded as "highly belligerent."*

*This paper contained the circular of the Mexican minister of foreign relations to the diplomatic corps, dated 31st May, 1842,—(answered by Mr. Thompson on the 1st of June,)—relative to public meetings in the United States favorable to Texas; the aid furnished Texas by *volunteers* from the United States; and the trade in arms and munitions of war with Texas. Doc. No. 266, H. of R., 27th congress, 2d session.

He also obtained a newspaper published in Boston, quoting a paragraph from the New Orleans Advertiser of the 19th April, 1842, in which it was asserted,—upon what the editor deemed authentic information,—that Mexico had ceded the Californias to England for seven millions of dollars. These documents reached our sensitive commodore at a moment when his suspicions were aroused by other circumstances. For, on the 5th of September, Rear-Admiral Thomas, a British commander, sailed from Callao in the Dublin having previously despatched two of his fleet with sealed orders just received from England. The whole fleet, he believed, was secretly on its way to Panama to embark reinforcements of troops, from the West Indies, to take armed possession of the Californias in conformity with the allegation of the Boston and New Orleans editors.*

Commodore Jones immediately hastened from the port of Callao to Lima, where, in a conversation with the American chargé d'affaires, Mr. Pickett, he formed the decided opinion that there would be war not only with Mexico but with Great Britain also.† Accordingly, he lost no time in preparing for sea, and on the 7th of September, sailed for the coast of Mexico.

On the 19th of October, Jones arrived at Monterey, in the frigate United States, accompanied by the Cyane, Captain Stribling. They did not communicate with the shore or endeavor, in any authentic way, to ascertain the state of our political relations; but at four o'clock in the afternoon, Captain Armstrong, the flag captain of the United States, landed, and delivered to the acting governor, Don Juan Alvarado, a letter from Commodore Jones, requiring the immediate surrender of the place, with its forts, castles, ammunitions and arms, to the United States, in order to save it from the hor-

*See. doc., No. 166, H. of R., 27th congress, 3d session, page 85.
†Id. pages 15, 68, 73.

rors of war, which would be the immediate consequences of a refusal to submit. Alvarado, upon this summons, consulted the military and civil authorities; and, finding that the garrison consisted of only twenty-nine men, that the artillery was composed of eleven pieces, entirely useless from the rottenness of their carriages, and that the whole number of muskets and carbines, good and bad, did not exceed a hundred and fifty, he surrendered the place, which was taken possession of by the Americans early on the 20th of October. The articles of capitulation signed on the occasion provide, that the Mexican soldiers shall march out with colors flying, and shall remain as prisoners of war until they can be sent to Mexico, and that the inhabitants shall be protected in their persons and property, so long as they conduct themselves properly, and do not infringe the laws of the United States. Commodore Jones at the same time issued a proclamation to the Californians, declaring that "he came in arms as the representative of a powerful nation, against which the existing government of Mexico had engaged in war, but not with the intention of spreading dismay among the peaceful inhabitants," and inviting them to submit to the authority of a government which would protect them forever in the enjoyment of liberty.

The evening and night of the 20th passed quietly; but, on the next day, the commodore seems to have reflected on the results of a bloodless conquest which was even more easily won than the victories of Cortez and Pizarro three hundred years before. Learning that there was late and pacific news from Mexico, and, forthwith despatching his private secretary and chaplain to seek for it, they discovered, in the office of the Mexican commissary, several packages containing unopened files of gazettes, as late as the 4th of August. "The general tone of the articles,"—says the commodore,—

"relating to the United States, in these papers, was pacific, whilst the certainty that Mexico had not commenced hostilities against us, up to the 22d of August, was established by private commercial letters from Mazatlan." Thus, it seemed to him, that the crisis had passed; that his victory was barren, that the reported cession of the Californias to England was untrue and could not have been prevented even by his valor. The war which had been recklessly undertaken upon surmises or newspaper articles, and stimulated by the sailing of an English fleet with sealed orders, came to an end as it began—by Mexican journals.

Accordingly, on the 21st of the month, Commodore Jones addressed another letter to the acting governor, Alvarado, announcing that information received since the capture of the place, left him no reason to doubt that the difficulties between Mexico and the United States had been adjusted; and that, being anxious to avoid all cause of future controversy, he was ready to restore the place, with its forts and property, to the Mexicans, in the same condition in which they were before the seizure. Monterey was therefore at once evacuated by the Americans, and reoccupied by the Mexicans, whose flag, on being rehoisted, was saluted by our ships.

If the commodore of our squadron had prudently despatched his secretary and chaplain on a pacific mission of inquiry under a flag of truce, immediately upon his arrival, it is extremely probable that they would either have discovered on the 20th the newspapers they found on the 21st, or have received the commercial letter which terminated the capture. This would have prevented an angry diplomatic correspondence; it would have allayed the irritation of national sensibility, and, whilst it saved us from the imputation of attempting to intimidate a weak power, would not have subjected

our forces to the mortification of mistake upon such grievous subjects as peace and war. The Mexican papers, of course, viewed the matter as a national insult; and the government gazette, published in the capital, unequivocally asserted that Commodore Jones attacked Monterey, agreeably to orders from his government, with the view of conquering California, but that finding the country in a state of defence, (for which thanks were due to President Santa Anna and his efficient minister of war,) he was obliged to abandon his plan and invent a story for his justification.*

It is scarcely possible for a citizen of the United States to take a different view of the subject without a full knowledge of the facts; for it could hardly be believed that the commander of a naval station, during a period of profound peace, would venture to summon towns to surrender, to land forces, take prisoners, and hoist our national flag on friendly soil, without the authority or connivance of his government.†

*Diario del Gobierno—Mexico, 1842.

†A correspondence relative to this seizure of Monterey took place at Washington between Mr. Webster, secretary of state, and Gen. Almonte, the Mexican minister; and, in Mexico, between Señor Bocanegra, minister of foreign affairs, and Mr. Waddy Thompson, our diplomatic representative. Mexico complained bitterly of our insulting descent on her territory, and our ministers apologized gracefully for the unauthorised act. The correspondence between the governments and with Commodore Jones will be found in document No. 166, H. of R., 27th congress, 3d session, 1843.

The recall of Commodore Jones by the secretary of the navy is the following words:

"NAVY DEPARTMENT, January 24, 1843.

"SIR: Although no official intelligence of the recent occurrences at Monterey has reached this department, yet the leading facts have been communicated in a form sufficiently authentic to justify and render necessary my immediate action. In the opinion of this government it is due to the friendly relations subsisting between the United States and Mexico, and to the respect which every nation owes to the rights of other nations,

CHAPTER III.

The origin of the war—History of the pacification between Spain and Holland in 1609—Spain and Mexico should have followed the example—The Texas question—Origin of the Texas revolution—True history of it—Resistance to the Central despotism of Santa Anna—Mexican war against Texas—Independence of Texas—Santa Anna's retraction in 1846 of his anti-federative opinions.

THE student of Mexican history, at this period, will derive instruction from a narrative of the connexion which once existed between Spain and the Netherlands and its fatal rupture.

After the fall of the duke of Burgundy in 1477, his daughter Mary brought the low countries to Austria by her marriage with the Emperor Maximilian; and his grandson, Charles V, united these provinces with Spain. During the reign of Charles, their ancient liberties were carefully respected, and the country prospered whilst the Protestant religion spread throughout it in spite of stern opposition. But

that you should be recalled from the command of the squadron in the Pacific.

"In adopting this course it is not designed to prejudge the case, *nor even to indicate any opinion as to the propriety or impropriety of your conduct in the matter alluded to.* That will of course be made the subject of proper inquiry after you return to the United States, when full justice will be done as between yourself and your own country. The present order has reference only to the just claims of Mexico on this government for such a disavowal of the attack on Monterey as will fully recognize the rights of Mexico, and at the same time place the conduct of this government in a proper light before the nations of the world. Commodore Dallas will relieve you as soon as he can conveniently reach the station and you will

when his successor, Philip II, mounted the throne, all prudence in the government of the Belgic and Batavian provinces seems to have been abandoned, and unbridled persecution was let loose on the civil and religious rights of the people. Granvella and the bloody duke of Alva were the monarch's instruments in this sad misgovernment, which resulted in a total renunciation of allegiance to the king of Spain. Long and bitter was the rebellion,—continuing from the middle of the sixteenth century to the year 1609,—when the Spanish claim to the sovereignty of the new republic of Holland was virtually resigned under the form of a truce for twelve years between the belligerents.*

The independence of the united provinces was thus, in fact achieved, and it was recognized by all the great powers of Europe except Spain; still Holland went through the thirty years war, before her nationality was secured by the peace of Westphalia.

From this sketch it will be perceived that Spain, although willing to forego the continuance of war, and to save the point of honor between herself and the rebellious provinces when it was impossible to recover her dominion over them, nevertheless, clung with stupid pride to her abstract right of reconquest for a long period after she had substantially acknowledged their freedom. The dismemberment of Spain was, of course, an event which the monarch could not be-

return to the United States in such mode as may be most convenient and agreeable to yourself.

"I am respectfully yours,

"A. P. UPSHUR.

"Com. Thos. Ap. C. Jones, commanding Pacific squadron."

I believe that the commodore was not tried by a court of inquiry or a court martial after his return, but that the affair has slumbered since the date of the above letter.

* Arnold's third lecture on modern history.

hold without regret, for it was natural that he should seek to transmit his dominions to posterity uncurtailed of their fair proportions. Yet, in the adoption of a diplomatic *ruse*,—in the truce of twelve years,—there was a degree of wisdom which it would have been well for Spain to recollect when it became evident that the revolt of her American colonies was about to terminate in their independence. The passions between the belligerents would have had time to cool. The common ties of blood and language might gradually have bound up the wounds made by war. The intervention of friendly powers would have obtained concessions from the discreet parent,—and thus Peru and Mexico might still have shone as the brightest jewels in the Spanish crown. No quarrel ever terminated in perfect re-establishment of amity without tolerance or retraction on the part of one of the disputants. Superior force may overawe into silence or crush by its ponderous blows, yet the non-resistance and taciturnity which ensue are but the repose that precedes the hurricane, in which the elements seem gathering strength to pour forth their wrath with irresistible fury.

So was it with Spain and her American colonies. Instead of soothing and pacific measures, tending to allay resentment and bring back the rebel to allegiance, the utmost violence was at once adopted both in deeds and language, and scenes of barbarity were enacted by Calleja and his myrmidons from which the heart recoils with horror.*

Severe as was the lesson taught by the conduct of Spain to Mexico, that republic, nevertheless, resolved not to profit by it when she, in turn, saw one of her States discontented with her misrule and usurpations. If Texas had been soothed; if justice had been speedily done; if the executive had despatched discreet officers, and reconciled the differences

* Robinson's Memoirs of the Mexican Revolution, pages 20, 22. 24.

between the North American emigrants and the Spaniards, not only in civil and municipal government, but in religion and temper,—Texas might not have been lost to Mexico,—but, invigorated by a hardy and industrious population, would have poured commercial wealth into her coffers, and furnished her factories among the mountains with an abundance of that staple which the native Indians are as unused as they are unwilling to cultivate. Had Mexico been even as wise as Philip, in 1609, and saved her punctilious honor by a twelve years truce, she would only have postponed the settlement of her difficulties, until her internal affairs became sufficiently pacific to enable a firm government to act with discretion and justice.

Since the year 1843 the Texas question has been so much a matter of party dispute in the United States that the true history of the revolt seems to be almost forgotten. I shall not hesitate therefore to recount some of the events connected with it, because they are relevant to the issue between us and Mexico, as well as necessary to the elucidation of the justice of her quarrel.

It is an error that the Texan rebellion was conceived in a spirit of sheer fraud upon Mexico; and writers who seek to stigmatize it thus are entirely ignorant of its origin.

The contest that arose between the central and federal parties in Mexico immediately after the establishment of independence has been narrated in a preceding chapter. The first *federal* constitution is an almost literal copy of our own; but its equitable and progressive principles did not suit the military despots who, whilst they commanded the army, held the physical power of Mexico in their hands. The consequence was that during the administration of the first president, Victoria, there were *pronunciamientos* against federa-

tion and in favor of centralism, by *Padré Arénas*, and at Tulancingo, under the "plan of Montayno." Quarrels in the party lodges of the Yorkinos and Escossceses—the liberalists and centralists—next arose;—and, finally, the revolution under the "plan of Toluca," destroyed the cherished constitution of 1824, by striking a death blow at the federative principle. This plan vested the power in a central government, abolished State legislatures, and changed those States into departments under the control of military governors, who were responsible to the chief authorities of the nation alone. These principles were embodied in the new constitution of 1836, and were, of course, distasteful to every friend of genuine liberty.*

Meanwhile, the beautiful province of Texas had not been an unconcerned spectator of events. Bordering on the Gulf of Mexico, and stretching along our Southern boundary, it contained an extensive territory, fine rivers, wide prairies, and a soil capable of maintaining near ten millions of people.—Such a country naturally attracted the attention of the people of the United States, numbers of whom are always ready, with the adventurous spirit that characterises our race, to seek new lands and improve their fortunes by emigrating from the crowded places of their birth. The project of colonizing Texas, had, therefore, struck an intelligent citizen of our country; and, on the 17th of January, 1821, Moses Austin obtained permission from the supreme government of the eastern internal provinces of New Spain at Monterey, to settle a colony of emigrants in Texas. Accordingly, in the following winter, his son, Stephen F. Austin, who undertook the enterprize in obedience to a testamentary request of his father, appeared on the Brazos with the first Anglo-American settlers.

* Mexico as it was and as it is, pp. 336, 339. Foote's History of Texas.

In January, 1823, a national colonization law, approved by the Emperor Iturbidé, was adopted by the Mexican congress, and, on the 18th of February, a decree was issued authorizing Austin to proceed with the founding of his colony. This decree, after Iturbidé's abdication and the downfall of the Imperial government, was confirmed by the first executive council in accordance with a special order of the Mexican congress.

In 1824, the federal constitution was adopted and proclaimed as the established polity of the land;—and, at this period, the character of Texas begins for the first time to assume an independent aspect, for, by a decree of the 7th of May, it was united with Coahuila, and, under the name of Coahuila and Texas, formed one of the constituent, sovereign States of the Mexican confederacy. Up to this period, whilst all was proceeding well in the capital, the scheme of emigration, seems to have met with no discouragement. By an act passed in August, 1824, another *general* colonization law was established;—and, by a *State* colonization law of Coahuila and Texas, foreigners were invited to settle within the limits of that especial jurisdiction. Thus it was that State sovereignty first accrued to Texas and Coahuila under the federal system,—a system similar to the one under which the colonists had formerly lived in our Union and under which, by the adoption of their own State laws, they signified their willingness to become members of the Mexican confederacy. This State sovereignty was never resigned, but, on the contrary, was always distinctly asserted. The federation existed precisely for the same purposes that the union of our States was formed; and, as soon as the constitution was destroyed by intrigue and revolutionary violence in 1835, the several States were remitted to their inherent rights, independent of any military despot who succeeded in

seizing the central power. Meanwhile our people had flocked to Texas under the belief that a constitution which was a transcript of our own, would secure peace and prosperity to settlers. Accustomed to find laws observed and the constitution indestructible, they expected to encounter the same regularity and firmness in that virgin State. They were industrious in their pursuits, and willing to abide the settlement of all quarrels in the capital; nor was it until long after the federal and centralist disputes commenced, that they began even to notice the political convulsions which were so ominous of disaster. The quiet and orderly conduct of our emigrants was, nevertheless, not regarded so favorably by the Mexicans. The rapidly growing strength of the Texans and their strict devotion to republicanism, attracted the jealousy of the supreme government; and when a Mexican begins either to fear or to doubt, the provocation is quite enough to convert him into an oppressor. Accordingly, on the 6th of April, 1830, an arbitrary law was passed by which the future immigration of American settlers to Texas was prohibited. Military posts of *surveillance* were established over the State, and ignorant and insolent soldiers of another race, began to domineer over a people whom they regarded as inferiors. At length the civil authorities of Texas were entirely disregarded, and the emigrants hitherto unused at home or abroad to an armed police, or to the sight of a uniform except on parade days, suddenly found themselves subjected to the capricious tyranny of military rule.*

On the 26th of June, 1832, the colonists took arms against this despotic interference with their constitutional freedom and beseiged and captured the fort at Velasco. The garrison at Anahuac and that at Nacogdoches, were next reduced; and, in December of that year, when hostilities were suspended

* Document No. 40, H. of R. 25th cong. 1st sess. p. 4.

between Santa Anna and Bustamante, the colonists were again restored to the enjoyment of their rights guarantied under the constitution.

In May 1824, Texas had been promised a separate State constitution as soon as she was prepared for it, but upon application to congress in 1833, after framing a suitable instrument in general convention at San Félipe, her request was denied. In 1835 the crisis at length arrived. The federal constitution fell. The resistance of several States to this despotism was suppressed by force. The legislature of Cohuila and Texas was dispersed at the point of the bayonet. Zacatecas, a brave stronghold of federalism, was assaulted by the central chiefs and her people butchered. And, finally, the whole republic, save Texas, yielded to Santa Anna.

As this state at once resolved to maintain her sovereignty and federative rights, corresponding committees of safety and vigilance were promptly formed in all the municipalities. An immediate appeal to arms proclaimed the people's resolution to adhere to the constitution; and at Gonzales, Goliad, Bexar, Conception, Sepantillan, San Patricio, and San Antonio, they were victorious over the centralists. In November, 1835, the delegates of the Texan people assembled in "general consultation," and declared that "they had taken up arms in defence of the federal constitution of 1824, and that they would continue faithful to the Mexican confederacy as long as it should be governed by the laws that were framed for the protection of their political rights; that they were no longer morally or politically bound by the compact of union; yet, stimulated by the generous sympathy of a free people, they offered their assistance to such members of the confederacy as would take up arms against military despotism. This patriotic manifesto declaring at once the freedom of Texas and offering to other parts of Mexico a defensive alli-

ance in favor of constitutional liberty, found no response from the overawed States, and thus Texas was abandoned to the mercy of a military president, who signalized his campaign of 1836 by acts of brutality which must forever consign his name to infamy."* Notwithstanding Santa Anna's successes at San Antonio and his frightful massacres, General Houston, the commander of the Texan forces, met and conquered the Mexicans on the 21st of April, 1836, in the brilliant action at San Jacinto, and thenceforth, in the emphatic language of an American statesman "the war was at an end."†

"No hostile foot found rest" within her territory for six or seven years ensuing this event, and Mexico, by confining her assaults to border forays practically abstained from all efforts to re-establish her dominion.‡ In this peaceful interval the country rapidly filled up with emigrants; adopted a constitution; established a permanent government, and obtained an acknowledgement of her independence by the United States and other powers. It was then supposed that nearly one hundred thousand people occupied the territory; and, in 1837, they sought to place themselves under the protection of our confederacy. But our government declined the proposition made through the Texan plenipotentiary, upon the ground that the treaty of amity and peace between the

* A full account of this campaign will be found in a work entitled "Primera Campaga de Tejas," published in Mexico in August 1837, by Don Ramon Martinez Caro, who was Santa Anna's military secretary during the campaign. He treats his former chief with unsparing severity, and very clearly attributes to him all the ferocious acts of the war. In Thompson's "Recollections of Mexico," a conversation of the ex-minister with Santa Anna will be found, in which his exculpation is attempted. pp. 68, *et seq.*

† Mr. Webster's letter to Waddy Thompson, 8th July, 1842.

‡ Webster to Thompson *ut antea.*

United States and Mexico should not be violated by an act which necessarily involved the question of war with the adversary of Texas.*

This brief history of the Texan revolt against centralism seems to place the authorities of that country on a firm basis of natural and constitutional right. In the constant conflicts that have taken place throughout Mexico between the federalists and centralists, or rather between democracy and despotism, Texas attempted no more than any of the liberal States of Mexico would have done, had not the free voice of educated patriots been elsewhere stifled by military power. The only difference between them is, that in Texas there was an Anglo-American population bold and strong enough to maintain republicanism, whilst in Mexico, the mongrel race of Spaniards and Indians was too feeble to resist effectually.

From 1836 to 1846 Santa Anna diligently persevered in the support of his central usurpation. But in the latter year the principles of the Texan revolution obtained a decided victory over military despotism, and even Santa Anna himself, who had been the originator of all the revolutions of his country, the disturber of its peace, and destroyer of its political morality was forced to make a humiliating confession of his errors.

It will be remembered that he was exiled from Mexico in the year 1845, and resided in Havana until the summer of 1846, when a revolution against the government of Paredes prepared the way for his return. On the 8th of March, 1846, in writing to a friend a letter which has since been published he declares that: "the love of provincial liberties being firmly

* Letter of Mr. Forsyth to General Hunt, 25th Aug. 1847. Doc. No 40, H. of R., 25th congress, 1st session.

rooted in the minds of all, and the democratic principle predominating every where, nothing can be established in a solid manner, in the country, which does not conform with these tendencies; nor without them can we attain either order, peace, prosperity, or respectability among foreign nations. To draw every thing to the centre, and thus to give unity of action to the republic, as I at one time considered best, is no longer possible; nay more, I say it is dangerous; it is contrary to the object which I proposed for myself in the unitarian system, because we thereby expose ourselves to the separation of the northern departments, which are the most clamorous for freedom of internal administration." *

In this remarkable retraction of Santa Anna's despotic principles, Texas finds a perfect vindication of her revolt. It would have been well for Mexico had her military president been willing to make the same concessions before the memorable battle of San Jacinto!

* Translation of a letter from General Santa Anna, in Mexico as it was and as it is.—4th edition, page 414.

CHAPTER IV.

Origin of the war continued—Proposed annexation of Texas to the United States by treaty—Efforts of several administrations to recover Texas after the Florida treaty—President Tyler's objects—Mexican opinions—British intrigue—British views relative to Texas—Defeat of the treaty in the senate—French opinions.

THERE is no doubt that although the government of the United States was anxious to preserve a strict neutrality between the belligerents in 1837, and, thus, to avoid assuming the war with Mexico by annexing an insurgent State, it, nevertheless, refused the proffered union with regret. From the earliest period, our statesmen contended that, by the Louisiana treaty, we acquired a title to Texas extending to the Rio Grande, and that we unwisely relinquished our title to Spain by the treaty of 1819 which substituted the Sabine for the Rio Grande as our western boundary.* But, divested as we were by solemn compact with Spain, of what may have been our territory under the treaty with France, it was idle to regard Texas as a proper subject for restoration to the Union whilst active hostilities were waged by Mexico. Nevertheless, such was the evident value of the province,

* See Mr. Clay's letter on the Texas question, Raleigh, N. C., April, 1844. I shall discuss the boundary elsewhere in this volume. When Texas offered herself in 1837 to the United States it was only two years after Mexico had overthrown the federal constitution, and not even *one* after the battle of San Jacinto. A great change however took place in the general aspect of affairs between that period and the final annexation.

and such the anxiety to regain our ancient limits that before the outbreak of the revolution, Mr. Clay, as secretary of state under the administration of Mr. Adams, in March of the years 1825 and 1827, directed Mr. Poinsett, our envoy in Mexico, to negotiate for the transfer of Texas. This direction was repeated by Mr. Van Buren to our minister in August, 1829; and was followed by similar instructions from Mr. Livingston on the 20th of March, 1833, and by Mr. Forsyth on the 2d of July, 1835. President Jackson, however, was not contented with negotiations for that province alone; but, looking forward, with statesmanlike forecast, to the growth and value of our commerce in the Pacific ocean as well as on the west coast of America, he required the secretary of state, in August, 1835, to seek from Mexico a cession of territory, whose boundary, beginning at the mouth of the Rio Grande, would run along the eastern bank of that river to the thirty-seventh degree of latitude, and continue thence, by that parallel, to the Pacific. This demand, if granted by Mexico, not only secured Texas, but would have included the largest and most valuable portion of California together with the noble bay of San Francisco, in which our navy and merchantmen might find a safe and commodious refuge.*

Our anxiety to reannex Texas by peaceable negotiation was not met, however, by a correspondent feeling upon the part of Mexico.

Mr. Poinsett, on his return from Mexico, informed Mr. Clay that he had forborne even to make an overture for the repurchase of Texas, because he knew that such a negotiation would be impracticable, and believed that any hint of our desire would aggravate the irritations already existing

* Executive document, No. 42, H. of R., 25th congress, 1st session, contains the letters referred to.

between the countries.* The events which subsequently transpired in Texas, during the period when emigration increased from the United States, to that of the actual outbreak of hostilities, prevented the formation, in Mexico, of any party favorable to such an enterprise; and, after the war began, all hope of negotiation between us was dispelled.

"A leading member of the Mexican cabinet once remarked to me," says Mr. Thompson, in his Recollections of Mexico,† "that he believed the tendency of things was towards the annexation of Texas to the United States, and that he greatly preferred such a result either to the independence of Texas or any connection or dependence of Texas upon England; that if it became an independent power, other departments of Mexico would unite with it either voluntarily or by conquest, and that if there was any connexion between Texas and England, English merchandize would be smuggled into Mexico through Texas to the utter ruin of Mexican manufactures and revenue.

"In one of my last interviews with Santa Anna," continues the American minister, "I mentioned this conversation. He replied with great vehemence that he would 'war forever for the reconquest of Texas, and that if he died in his senses his last words should be an exhortation to his countrymen never to abandon the effort to recover the province;' and, added he: 'you know, sir, very well, that to sign a treaty for the alienation of Texas would be the same thing as signing the death warrant of Mexico, for, by the same process, the United States would take one after another of the Mexican provinces, until they possessed them all.'"

Such were the feelings of Mexico in regard to annexation, and such the anxieties in cabinets of all parties in the United

* Mr. Clay's letter on annexation, *ut antea*.

† Recollections of Mexico, p. 238.

States to restore our ancient limits, when the presses of our country intimated, in the year 1844, that President Tyler was negotiating a treaty of union with Texas as an independent power. It was on the eve a presidential canvass; and whilst the incumbent of the executive chair sought very naturally to present himself to the people with the successful results of a popular and beneficial negotiation, there were other candidates who opposed the measure both on principle and policy, as well as on account of the mode in which it was to be effected.

I might very properly in this historical sketch pass over the narrative of annexation, and, deal with the union, ultimately effected between Texas and the United States as the only important fact. Texas, bound to the North American confederacy by a solemn act of congress,—the indisputable constitutionality of which is implied in its passage,—is, indeed, the only subject which the historian is compelled to regard. Whatever results ensued, whether they were perceived and predicted by the statesmen of the time, or, were entirely latent until developed during the last two years, must be entirely attributed to the act of congress which consummated annexation and reposed in the hands of a president the executive power of solemnizing the union. Nevertheless, I believe it due to impartial history that I should state concisely the causes which seem to have provoked annexation, and, indeed, rendered it almost necessary at the time when it occurred.

We have seen that active hostilities by Mexico against the insurgents had either ceased for nearly seven years, or had been confined to such border forays as resembled predatory incursions rather than civilized hostilities. Statesmen, in all parties, regarded the war as ended; for Mexico, impoverished by the thriftless administrations that ruled and plundered her

during the short intervals between her revolutions, was in no condition to carry it on with reasonable prospects of success. France, England, Belgium and the United States, had acknowledged Texan independence and established diplomatic relations with the republic. Emigrants settled the interior, and invited accessions. The constitution and laws of the nation were fixed upon a firm basis, while the government was conducted with ability. A lucrative commerce from foreign countries began to pour into the territory. New towns sprang up every where, and Texas exhibited to the world every evidence of an orderly, well regulated government, with infinitely greater strength and stability than the military republic from which she was divorced. Mexico, nevertheless, refused to recognize her independence notwithstanding her inability to make any effort for reconquest. The leading men of Texas anxiously desired that their national independence should continue, and the moral sense of the world, in contrasting the superior progress of the Anglo-American race with the anarchy and feebleness of Mexico, was naturally solicitous to behold the infant colony successful rather than to see it fall a prey to the passions of a people with whom it had no sympathy, and, in whose victory, they might witness the outpouring of a pent up wrath which would never cease in its vindictive persecutions until the province was entirely desolated.* This was not alone

* It was evidently the intention of Mr. Webster, whilst secretary of state, to adopt some prudent scheme for the settlement of the war between Texas and Mexico. In January, 1843, he addressed a despatch to Mr. Thompson, who was then our envoy in Mexico, in which he directs him to use his good offices with the Mexican secretary to mitigate the animosity of the government. "Mexico," says he, "has an undoubted right to resubjugate Texas, if she can, so far as other states are concerned, by the common and lawful means of war. *But other States are interested,—especially the United States, a near neighbor of both parties, are interested,—not only in the restoration*

the common feeling in the United States, but it prevailed in Europe also. The British minister of foreign affairs, Lord Aberdeen, and that zealous partizan of liberty, Lord Brougham, took occasion in the house of peers in August, 1843, to express their solicitude as to the prospects of Texas. Lord Brougham characterized it as a country as large as France, possessing the greatest natural capabilities, but, at the same time he perceived in it an embryo state, (a large portion of whose soil was adapted to cultivation by white labor,) which might become a boundary and barrier against the slavery of the United States of America. If, by the good offices of England, Mexico could be induced to acknowledge Texan independence upon the condition of abolishing slavery, he suggested the hope that it would lead to the extinction of slavery in the southern States of our Union.

Lord Aberdeen replied to Lord Brougham, that England had not only acknowledged her independence, but had also negotiated with Texas a treaty of commerce as well as one for the abolition of the slave trade. He did not believe that there was any importation of slaves into Texas by sea, but, he alleged, there was a large influx of slaves from the United States to that country. As soon as negotiations were commenced with Texas, the utmost endeavors of England had been used to end the war which prevented the full recogni-

of peace between them, but also in the manner in which the war shall be conducted if it shall continue. These suggestions may suffice for what you are requested to say amicably and kindly to the Mexican secretary, *at present; but I may add, for your information, that it is in the contemplation of this government to remonstrate, in a more formal manner, with Mexico, at a period not far distant, unless she shall consent to make peace with Texas, or shall show the disposition and ability to prosecute the war with respectable forces.* Executive document, No. 271, H. of R., 28th cong., 1st ses., p. 69.

For the opinions of French statesmen on this question see the debate between Guizot, Thiers, Berreyer and others, reported in vol. 70, of Niles' Register, p. 25, 26.

tion of the independence of Texas by Mexico; but all their endeavors had been met by difficulties, although he was happy to declare that an armistice had been established between the two powers which he hoped would lead to the absolute acknowledgment of her independence. In the existing state of negotiations between the parties, however, he thought it would not contribute to an useful end to express any opinion as to the state of those negotiations, nevertheless he assured his noble friend that the matter would be pressed by every means in the power of her majesty's ministers.

The answer of Lord Brougham to this conversational speech of the minister of foreign affairs, was brief but ominous. Nothing, he declared, could be more satisfactory to him, whilst the statement of his lordship "would be hailed with joy by all who were favorable to the object of anti-slavery societies."*

I do not design in this history to discuss either the slavery question or the British project of propagating seditious opinions upon negro servitude by means of diplomacy on this continent. But, when we remember the guaranties of our constitution and the preponderence of the black population in our southern States, it must be conceded that it requires no great degree of sensibility to alarm the white inhabitants of that section and to render them anxious to counteract the avowed machinations of Great Britain. The abstract question of the right of slavery is altogether distinct from slavery as it exists in this Union, and as the foundation of property, population, labor, and, even, existence in the south.

For many years past the fanaticism of freedom has been

* Debates in the British house of lords, Friday 18th August, 1843, reported in the London Morning Chronicle of the 19th; and see executive document, No. 271, H. of R., 28th congress, 1st session.

warring against slavery, until it has created in our country a fanaticism of slavery which was quite as relentless in its obstinacy. It was therefore, natural that individuals who had refused our own congress the right to interfere with slavery, by denying the privilege of petition for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, should resist most ardently the jesuitical propagandism of a foreign power.

This was a question of grave importance to the south. It was an avowal of European policy that struck a death blow at American property; nor was it therefore at all surprising to see Mr. Calhoun, our secretary of state, who was a native and inhabitant of that part of the union, at once seize upon the project of prompt annexation as the only means of counteracting the evils of British diplomacy. If expressions, similar to those used by Lords Aberdeen and Brougham in the English parliament, had been casually uttered in the warm debates of our congress, perhaps but little attention would have been paid them by reflecting men; yet the most trifling observations of British statesmen always deserve notice, because they are well pondered and deliberately made. The opinions of Lord Brougham, assented to by the silence of Lord Aberdeen, had consequently an emphatic significance; and although the British minister of foreign affairs, as well as the envoy at Washington, subsequently disclaimed any attempt to interfere with the internal system of the United States, yet there can be no doubt that they wished to modify the condition and laws of a southern neighbor so as to effect indirectly what prudence taught them to avoid openly.* "Great Britain," said Lord Aberdeen, in a de-

* Ex. Doc. No. 271, H. of R., 28 cong., 1st sess. p. 48, *et seq*:—In an interview between Lord Aberdeen and Mr. Everett, in November, 1843, the secretary of foreign affairs told him that England had long been pledged to encourage the abolition of the slave trade *and of slavery*, as far as her influ-

spatch to the Hon. Mr. Pakenham, on the 26th December, 1843, "does not desire to establish in Texas, whether partially dependent on Mexico or entirely independent, any dominant influence. She only wishes to share her influence equally with other nations. Her objects are purely commercial, and she has no thought or intention of seeking to act directly or indirectly, in a political sense, on the United States through Texas."

It cannot be expected—for it is not the nature or policy of governments—that statesmen should disclose to each other, with perfect frankness, all their international ambitions, projects or hopes. A wise diplomacy conceals these things

ence extended and in every proper way, but had no wish to interfere with the *internal* concerns of governments. In reference to Texas, he said that "the suggestion that England had made or intended to make the abolition of slavery the *condition* of any treaty arrangement with her was wholly without foundation."—id. page 38. The *direct* interference of England in the *internal* affairs of other governments has often been very distinctly manifested notwithstanding Lord Aberdeen's disavowal. There is scarcely a country in Europe which has been unvisited by her arms or her diplomacy, either when it became her interest to do so, or when she had the necessary force to make success unquestionable. Her policy is, perhaps, not so much one of ambition as of avarice or necessity. She must feed her multitudes at home; and an extension of her wide spread commerce, with co-extensive privileges in new countries, will open new sources of wealth to her people. Nations are not to be blamed for seeking such advantages; but the nearer neighbor should be equally blameless for grasping, if possible, the benefit for herself, so as to keep off a dangerous rival and secure the revenues which otherwise would flow into that rival's coffers.

The excursive *philanthropy* of England was admirably depicted by the Frenchman, who, according to the London Times remarked that: "Your Englishman knows all about Timbuctoo, or Hindoostan, or the frozen regions about the North Pole; but ask him about Ireland, the country lying next his own, and he is perfectly innocent of any information on the subject. Africa he investigates—Ireland he neglects. He weeps for the suffering of the negro, but allows his Irish fellow subject to live in ignorance and filth, and often to die of starvation."

whilst in progress. But all governments take means to obtain secretly, as far as they are able, an insight into the views of each other. The diplomacy of the United States, although generally very frank, is nevertheless employed sometimes in this way, and, I believe our records will show, that wherever it became necessary for our departments to get information upon projects touching the interests of our country, they have always found means to discover the truth.

It is fortunate for the history of this annexation question that the commercial designs alluded to by Lord Aberdeen have been revealed to us. Some of the statements are made anonymously, yet, from the very nature of such disclosures whilst negotiations were pending, it cannot be expected that the names of informants would be revealed. Their value and character must be vouched for alone by the officers who communicate them to the world, and deem them sufficient to authorize the action of government. The authorities, to which I allude, were communicated to congress by President Tyler in May, 1844, and were submitted to him by Mr. Calhoun, as secretary of state, on the 16th of that month.*

By a convention, concluded in London on the 14th of November, 1840, between Her Majesty's government and the republic of Texas, it was agreed that the queen should tender her good offices to Mexico as mediator between the belligerents. Mexico, however, saw fit to reject this offer. But Texas, still animated by a desire for peace, sought to obtain a triple mediation of the three great powers,—the United States, France and England,—with the hope that under their auspices a settlement might speedily be made. To this arrangement, the governments of France and the United States assented with alacrity; while the government of Great

* Ex. Doc. No. 271, H. of R., 28th cong., 1st sess. p. 101, *et seq.*

Britain, though expressing an ardent desire to do all in its power by private mediatorial efforts, inclined to the opinion that it would be better, on all accounts, for each party to act alone, though similarly in point of tone and argument, in urging the Mexican government to recognize the independence of Texas.

This suggestion was communicated through Lord Cowley the British ambassador in Paris, to the French government, by whom it was approved.*

By this act of the British cabinet, it preserved its independence of all others, and abstained from combined action which would, necessarily, have disclosed its motives as well as its conduct. The objects of the ministers in retaining their independence of all other cabinets will now become more manifest.

If an abstract love of liberty is, indeed, the true cause why England seeks to abolish slavery throughout the world and has set the example of emancipation in her West India colonies, she may really deserve the high commendation of philanthropists. But it cannot be denied that whilst she diffuses a spirit of individual freedom, she does not regret to behold national dependence on herself established by interest and necessity. We find among the documents transmitted to congress by President Tyler, a number of private letters, in which it is alleged that the primary object of Great Britain's interference was to prevent absolute annexation to the United States. Indeed, Lord Aberdeen, in May, 1844, declared to Mr. Everett that he "shared with Lord Brougham the hope and belief that the treaty for annexation would not be ratified by our senate."†

If the independence of Texas could be secured on the

* Id.—p. 70. Letter of Mr. Van Zandt to Mr. Webster.

† Id.—p. 100. Washington, 24th January, 1843.

only probable ground upon which Mexico would acknowledge it,—a pledge that she would not subsequently join the United States;—and if so desirable a result,—which appealed directly to the ambition and vanity of the leading men of Texas, could be effected by the secret negotiations of her ministers, England foresaw that she would obtain a decided advantage over us in future negotiations, without a positive treaty stipulation to that effect. Texas, with every element of prosperity in her people and territory, was war-worn, and suffering from pecuniary embarrassments in which her revolution plunged her. For an agricultural and commercial people, peace and stability, under almost any liberal government, are all that is requisite to insure progress. England, a free, maratime and manufacturing country, deeply interested in Mexico as a purchaser, and in the United States as a rival, was precisely the nation to secure these advantages for Texas, especially as that republic offered a *point d'appui* which she could not find elsewhere on this continent.

The "free trade" policy of Great Britain was consequently addressed to the cupidity of Texas as a bewitching allurement; and this was, perhaps, secretly coupled with pecuniary offers which would enable her to struggle against adverse fortune during the first years of independence.

This liberal system, while it attracted to England the cotton of Texas in British vessels, would necessarily raise the national duties of the republic to the highest standard on American produce and provisions, at the same time that it introduced the manufactures of England without imposts. The schemers who had achieved emancipation in the British West Indies* imagined that the same result might be produced in Texas by sufficient inducements, and that white labor or *apprentices* would supply the place of slaves, thus

* See Lord Brougham's speech, *ut antea.*

striking an indirect blow at slavery in the southern States of our Union. Besides this, England would find a market for her manufactures which might temptingly address itself to the cupidity of the United States and of Mexico as well as of Texas. For, with such an extent of frontier on all sides, and with wastes between us, inhabited by a sparse or reckless population, the greatest inducements would be offered to convert Texas into a smuggling ground not only for our Union but especially for Mexico, whence British fabrics are almost excluded by exhorbitant tariffs. The policy of England would thus affect simultaneously our manufactures as well as our commerce. Instead of sending her merchandize to New York, she would find in Galveston a readier market to supply our southern States through the medium of contraband.* Her goods would naturally have been carried in British vessels, and thus the labor and commerce of the United States would be directly injured by England until we could afford to navigate and manufacture at cheaper rates.†

* Any one who is familiar with the condition of our Canadian frontier will understand the ease with which smuggling in British fabrics is carried on between the countries. An extensive business has, doubtless, always been sustained; and it is not unusual even for the ladies of certain towns along the frontier, to *shop* in Canada, with the understanding that their purchases are to be *delivered at the risk of the British vender, on the other side of the American line!*

† Executive document, 271, H. of R., 28th cong., 1st sess. Letter of Mr. Allen to Hon. R. J. Walker, and other letters copied on pages 103 and 105 of the same document.

The government of the United States entertained such views of the grasping policy of England for reasons which are clearly set forth in an able despatch from Mr. Calhoun to Mr. King, our envoy at the court of France. "The question," says the secretary of state, "is, by what means can Great Britain regain and keep a superiority in tropical cultivation, commerce and influence? Or shall that be abandoned and other nations, suffered to acquire the supremacy even to the extent of supplying British

The impolicy of permitting our carrying trade and home market, in such a country, to pass out of our hands into those of a commercial rival, and the dangers of counteracting or creating a contraband system which would almost immediately ensue, commended this annexation promptly to the notice of President Tyler. He perceived in British supremacy in Texas a multitude of evils. Collisions would arise which must endanger our peace. The power and influence of England would be intruded, geographically, on territory lying between us and Mexico. A large increase of our military forces would be necessary, not only to protect the United States from daily disputes with Texans, but to guard the border inhabitants against hostile inroads from Indians. Texas, he was authoritatively told, would seek the friendship of other nations if denied the protection of ours; and, in a condition of almost hopeless abandonment, would naturally fall an easy prey to any power that would protect her, should we refuse our alliance.*

markets to the destruction of the capital already vested in their production? These are the questions which now profoundly occupy the attention of her statesmen and have the greatest influence over her councils.

"In order to regain her superiority she not only seeks to revive and increase her own capacity to produce tropical productions, but to diminish and destroy the capacity of those who have so far outstripped her in consequence of her error. In pursuit of the former, she has cast her eyes to her East India possessions, to Central and Eastern Africa, with the view of establishing colonies there, and even to restore, substantially, the slave trade itself, under the specious name of transporting free laborers from Africa to her West India possessions, in order, if possible, to compete successfully with those who have refused to follow her suicidal policy. Her main reliance, however, is on the other alternative, to cripple or destroy the productions of her successful rivals. There is but one way by which it can be done, and that is by abolishing African slavery throughout this continent; and that she avows to be the constant object of her policy and exertions." Senate doc. No. 1, 28th cong. 1st sess. p. 44.

* President Tyler's message to the senate. 22nd April, 1844.

Such were some of the reasons that induced the president, in 1844, to direct Mr. Upshur, who was the secretary of state, to negotiate a treaty of annexation between the United States and Mexico, and thus, in his emphatic language,—"to break up and scatter to the winds the web of European intrigues."*

This treaty was transmitted to the senate on the 22nd of April, 1844, and immediately became the topic of discussion throughout the country. It was opposed and defended by some of the most distinguished men in the country. General Jackson pleaded that the golden moment might not be lost, and that we should not throw Texas into the arms of England.† Mr. Clay, whose nomination as a presidential candidate was expected to be shortly made, and Mr. Van Buren whose name was also speedily to come before a democratic convention assembled to select a candidate for the chief magistracy, both published long and argumentative letters against the project. The debate on the treaty in the senate was eager, and able. The northern abolitionists regarded it as a measure frought with danger to their cause, and as the basis of perpetual slavery, whilst the southern slave owners hailed annexation as a boon, which, at least for a season, would stay the aggressive arm that was raised against their rights and interests.

At length, the senate finally rejected the treaty; but President Tyler, by a message to the house of representatives, dated the 10th of June, transmitted the rejected document to the popular branch of the national legislature, so that, without suggesting the mode of annexation, the house of representatives might decide whether it should be accomplished in any shape.

* Letter of President Tyler to the Richmond Enquirer in 1847.

† President Jackson's letter 17th March, 1844, written in consequence of a private mission to him from President Houston of Texas.

At that moment, however, new elements of political commotion were introduced in the nomination of Mr. Clay and Mr. Polk by the respective party conventions held in Baltimore, and the project passed from the national legislature to the people for discussion during the presidential canvass.

NOTE.—The opinions and arguments adduced by the president in support of annexation have been singularly fortified by disclosures subsequent to the union between Texas and the United States. The British cabinet, mortified by defeat, has been silent upon the subject, but singular developments were made in debate in the French chambers. On the 12th and 20th of January, 1846, a discussion took place between Messieurs Guizot, Thiers, Berreyer and others, in which the Texas question, and the position of France, in the event of war between the United States and England, upon the Oregon question, was warmly debated. The minister, Guizot, alleged that in all the negotiations with Texas, France had sought commercial relations in consequence of the advantages offered of markets for French goods. He declared that it was his policy to interpose *an independent State in the midst of the United States*, and *that he believed it to be advisable to multiply the number of secondary independent States on our continent*, as the commercial and political interests of France would suffer materially by the foundation of a governmental unity in America. He watched our progress with a jealous eye, and he considered the policy of the United States in refusing to be the *ally* of any European power both right and wise in our view of the question.

M. Thiers, the former minister, replied to M. Guizot; and, after asserting that Texas had been annexed to our Union "to the great displeasure of England, and, as far as could be discovered, to the great displeasure of France," he declared that it was the true interest of his government to place Texas under the patronage of a powerful nation like ours rather than to abandon it to the influence of England. "You are aware," said he, "that *Texas is of great importance to the United States*, and that its possession was anxiously desired by that power: *I will add that never was an annexation made in a more regular manner.* For more than ten years Texas had been separated from Mexico, and all the powers, including France, had recognised it." He regarded the union of England and France in diplomacy between Mexico, Texas, and the United States, as adopted only to redeem the faults of the French cabinet during the last five years, and as a truckling peace-offering for its conduct on the question of the "right of search." But, of all the French orators and statesmen, none denounced

CHAPTER V.

Change of public feeling as to annexation—Election of President Polk—Mr. Clay defeated by the abolitionists—Almonté's threat—President Tyler attempts to soothe Mexico—His failure to do so—Mexican projects of reconquest—Want of confidence in Santa Anna—Loans—Downfall and disgrace of Santa Anna—His expulsion to Cuba—Herrera made provisional president—Congress of United States reconsiders annexation—Joint resolution passed with an alternative of negotiation—President Tyler adopts the first clause, and why—European intrigues—France and England operating on Texas and Mexico—Mexico offers independence provided Texas will not annex herself to the United States—Defeat of of the foreign scheme.

When Congress met in December, 1844, a remarkable change had come over the political world in the United States. The extraordinary popularity of Mr. Clay induced reflective men to believe, at the close of the last session, that he would be elected president, and that the prospects of immediate annexation would probably be blighted by that event. The great body of his partizans opposed the project of President Tyler; but the Democratic convention, assembled in Balti-

the conduct of the cabinet with more zeal than the eloquent Berreyer. He proved by facts and documents that it was at the instance of England, and in subservience to her, that the French government interposed, (as will be seen in the following chapter,) to maintain the separate independence of Texas:—"We have not limited ourselves"—exclaimed he—"to a wish and a counsel that Texas should retain her freedom, but we have been led to take a part in that which I regret I am compelled to regard as nothing else *than an intrigue*, which, unfortunately for our national dignity has borne all the marks of an *intrigue*, and has met, at last, its humiliation."—Niles' Register, vol. 70, pp. 25, 26, 27, 28, and vol. 68, p. 290.

more, in May, inscribed the fortunes of Texas on its banner together with the name of that party's candidate. The south immediately rallied around it, whilst the north assumed strange grounds of objection to the course of Mr. Clay. The Native American and Abolition parties in New York professed to vote with the friends of that gentleman in consequence of his opposition to annexation, and yet a sufficient number to defeat his election cast their ballots in direct contradiction of their principles. This was but another lesson of the danger of confiding in men or parties who have but a single idea. The folly of fanaticism commonly leads to violent inconsistencies, but perhaps a more palpable one was never exhibited than in the result of the presidential election of 1844.

When the project of annexation was first discussed in 1843 in the gazettes of the day, and before any decided action by the president or secretary of state, General Almonté, who was then Mexican envoy at Washington, protested earnestly against the act, and even threatened, by express order of his government, that on sanction being given to the incorporation of Texas into the United States, he would consider his mission as ended, seeing that the Mexican government was resolved to declare war as soon as it received information of such a deed.*

But Mr. Tyler, disregarding the irascible temper of the minister and his government, despatched pacific and soothing instructions to our chargé at Mexico, intimating a desire to act justly towards that republic, and to settle all questions growing out of the treaty as well as of boundary on the most liberal terms.†

The Mexican government, however, would listen to no

* Senate doc. No. 341, 28th cong. 1st sess. p. 95.

† Senate doc. No. 1, 28th cong. 2d sess. p. 53.

proposals of accommodation. The Texan question, as we have seen, was always one of great annoyance to the Mexican authorities; for although they acknowledged, in effect, that their dominion was really lost over Texas, yet their national pride and public feeling forced them to project, if they did not attempt, its reconquest.* Besides this, darkness was gathering around the fate of Santa Anna, who dared not undertake negotiations upon a subject so unpopular.

When a new congress assembled in Mexico in January, 1844, it was disposed to aid the executive in his scheme of reconquest. Four millions of dollars were therefore granted him; but when he claimed ten millions for the same purpose, whilst it was notorious that the first grant had not yet been collected, the members of congress absolutely refused to sustain Santa Anna's measures for the recovery of the lost territory. This refusal was not grounded upon any aversion of the Mexicans from reconquest, but solely because they believed the money would be extorted from the people only to be plundered by the president and his myrmidons. The politicians and country had alike, lost confidence in him; and Santa Anna, observing the rising storm, obtained permission from congress to retire to his estate of Manga de Clavo near the sea coast at Vera Cruz, whilst his friend Don Valentin Canalizo took his place in the capital as president *ad interim.*

Santa Anna hardly reached his estate when a fatal blow was struck against his administration from the departmental junta of Jalisco. This revolt was lead by General Paredes, and after a multitude of military and diplomatic

* General Almonté, the Mexican envoy, in a conversation in New York, confessed to the writer, in the spring of 1843, that Texas was lost to Mexico, but that all then desired by his countrymen was to save the point of honor before they acknowledged its independence.

manœuvres, resulted in Santa Anna's downfall on the 4th of January, 1845. The ex-president fled towards the sea-coast; but was captured by a detachment of volunteers at the village of Jico, whence he was transferred under a strong escort to the castle of Peroté. It is difficult even to imagine the bitter wrath with which the Mexican people assailed the captured chief. He, who but a few months before exercised despotic sway over the land, was now a prisoner and at the mercy of the mob. His friends interposed in this emergency to save his life both from popular fury and judicial action which might make it the penalty of his misrule. The strife was long and anxious, but, at length, an amnesty was declared, under which Santa Anna departed for Cuba on the 29th of May, 1845, accompanied by his wife and daughter.* The fury of the people against the exile may be imagined from the fact that they exhausted every means by which they could manifest their hatred of his deeds and memory. They thronged the streets singing ribald songs, and hawking ridiculous caricatures;—they tore his pictures from the walls, and hurled his statutes from their pedestals; and, with the fiendishness of hyenas, they even snatched from the grave the leg he had lost in battle with the French at Vera Cruz, and tossed it about the streets of Mexico!†

The result of Santa Anna's downfall was the establishment of a provisional government under General Herrera, president of the council. This person is represented to have been a discreet officer, whose judgment naturally led him to see the wisdom of a pacific course towards the United States, but whose destiny was finally controlled by the rash and unprincipled conduct of insurrectionary demagogues.

* Mexico as it was and as it is, 4th Ed. Letter xxv. p. 367.
† Id. page 382.

Meanwhile the congress of the United States reconsidered the Texan question, and after a long and ardent debate, finally passed a joint resolution for annexation, with an alternative permission to the executive to negotiate, provided he thought proper to adopt that course. This was a solemn decision of the question by the representatives of the people, and it was sustained by the president who did not permit himself to be influenced by the threats of Mexico or the hostile preparations made by that country. In fact, Mr. Tyler had been careful to guard against military surprises, for, in consequence of the early menaces of Mexico, he deemed it his duty, as a precautionary measure, to concentrate in the gulf and its vicinity a large portion of the Home squadron under the command of Commodore Conner, and, at the same time to assemble at fort Jesup on the Texan border, as large a military force as the demands of the service at other encampments would allow.

Thus, the joint resolution for annexing Texas to the United States, with its alternative power to negotiate, came to President Tyler and was approved by him on the 1st of March, 1845. On the fourth of the same month, James K. Polk, who had been chosen president of the United States, at the last election, was to assume the reins of government. President Tyler believed that the necessity for annexation was immediate and urgent in consequence of the reasons he had already presented to congress in his several messages. The only doubt therefore, that he experienced in making his selection, arose from a point of delicacy to his successor. The first section of the joint resolution authorized the erection of a new State of our Union out of the republic of Texas under certain conditions contained in the second section; whilst the third authorized the president to negotiate with that republic for admission either by treaty to be submitted

to the senate, or by articles of agreement to be presented to our houses of congress, as the president might direct.

Under these circumstances a cabinet council was summoned for the 2nd of March, and the point was resolved by informing the president's successor, Mr. Polk, of the proposed action, and, if he desired it, submitting to his perusal the despatch to Texas. Mr. Calhoun, our secretary of state, at the president's request, accordingly waited upon Mr. Polk, explained to him Mr. Tyler's selection of the first and second sections of the joint resolution, and expressed a readiness to exhibit the despatch to Mr. A. J. Donelson, who had been appointed chargé to Texas.* Mr. Polk courteously declined expressing an opinion concerning the executive action, accompanying his remark with some complimentary declaration; and, on that evening, a bearer of despatches with the requisite documents, was on his way to Mr. Donelson.†

This is a brief and accurate summary of the history of annexation so far as the action of our government is involved, and as is necessary for this narrative. The terms of annexation which were offered by the United States were accepted by Texas, and the public faith of both nations was solemnly pledged to a compact of union, which was finally consummated at the following session of congress, when Texas became a member of our confederacy.

There were other circumstances, however, which properly induced the prompt course of President Tyler in sending the joint resolution for the action of Texas; but, in order to un-

* House of Rep., doc. No. 2, 29th cong. 1st sess. p. 125.

† The election of the 1st and 2nd sections of the joint resolution made by President Tyler was subsequently approved by President Polk, as he declares both in his negotiations and in his message to congress of the 2nd December, 1845. H. of R., Doc. No. 2, 29th cong. 1st session, p. 3.

derstand these perfectly, it is necessary for us to direct our attention to the French and English negotiations between that republic and Mexico. In 1840, as we have seen, England preferred separate action on behalf of Texas, but she was now willing to unite with France against the aggrandizement of the United States. Monsieur de Saligny and the Hon. Mr. Elliott were the representatives of these European courts in Texas, and to the former of them was entrusted the active part of the diplomacy. Whilst the discussions were going on in the United States Mr. Elliott was never at rest. He was heard of in Charleston, in New Orleans, in Havana, in Mexico, and, again, in Texas. The restlessness of the agent denoted the anxiety of his government and of France.

The rejection of the annexation treaty by congress, in 1844, had almost deprived Texas of hope. She believed it impossible to expect a union with the United States, and was prepared to receive the mediation of France and England which would secure her independence. This was surely gratifying to the emissaries of these powers and they eagerly undertook the task of obtaining the coveted boon from Mexico. The Mexican ministry, ever anxious to thwart the union with our confederacy, was equally pleased to avert it by any diplomatic *ruse* that would save the point of honor, and place her erect before the world. Besides this, the Mexicans relied on a hope that increasing difficulties between the United States and England upon the Oregon boundary question, would make us loath to undertake a war with a southern neighbor whilst our north and our sea board were menaced by Great Britain. This hope of a countermenace from England inspirited the Mexican cabinet and made it solicitous to resist us successfully. Herrera's ministry was composed of discreet and patriotic men; but, in the first moments of their power, they dared not oppose popular

prejudices. The revolution which overthrew Santa Anna was one of the few that sprang from the popular branches of the nation, and originated neither in factions, the army, or the church, but derived its success from the universal feeling that existed against the oppressive misrule of the executive.* Nevertheless popular feeling was against our country, and the cabinet took its tone from its patrons.

There can be little doubt of the fact, that the notion of probable difficulties between the United States and England on the boundary question, was studiously fostered by emissaries who were hostile to us. Herrera's cabinet therefore hailed with delight the propositions which were brought to Mexico by Mr. Elliott, and were presented by the Hon. Charles Bankhead and Baron Alleye de Cyprey, the British and French ministers. These propositions, Señor Cuevas laid before the Mexican congress on the 21st of April, 1845. The preliminary conditions offered by Texas, under French and English mediation, and transmitted from that republic by President Jones, on the 29th of March, were the following:

1st. That Mexico shall consent to acknowledge the independence of Texas.

2nd. That Texas shall engage and stipulate in the treaty *not to annex herself to or become subject to any country whatever.*

3rd. The limits and other conditions shall be matter of arrangement by final treaty.

4th. That Texas should be willing to remit disputed points *concerning territory and other matters to the arbitration of umpires.*

These spiteful stipulations, evidently aimed against the United States, and bearing the marks of their European parentage, suited the taste of Mexico precisely. Her congress,

* Mexico as it was and as it is—p. 390, 4th ed.

therefore, at once deemed it advisable to entertain the Texan proposals, and to proceed to the celebration of a treaty. But when the Baron de Cyprey announced this assent to the president of Texas, on the 20th of May, it was already too late for the success of European diplomacy. Our congress had passed the joint-resolution, our president had approved it, and our minister, Mr. Donelson, was in Texas preparing the cabinet to act favorably upon our propositions. Accordingly when Mr. Elliott returned in June to Texas in a French corvette, the public mind was already manifesting its anxiety to accede to our liberal offers, which were finally sanctioned by the Texan convention on the 4th of July, 1845.

Had the resolution for annexation not been adopted at the preceding session of congress, the pretensions of Mexico, instead of being lowered, would have been raised still higher than they were on the receipt of the propositions from President Jones. The mediatorial powers of Mr. Elliott would, in all probability, have been employed in negotiating truces and treaties until the foundation was laid for the operation of those peaceful means by which Lord Aberdeen declared it his intention to promote his philanthropic views. "Abandoned by the United States, oppressed by debt, and wearied by the increasing burthens and privations of war, Texas would have been at the mercy of Britain, and her statesmen would have accepted almost any terms to secure independence and peace."*

* Letter from Mr. Donelson to Mr. Buchanan, 2nd June, 1845, H. of R., doc. No. 2, 29th cong. 1st sess. p. 52. I do not discuss the question of the *mode* of annexation, whether by treaty, joint resolution, or negotiation, as that would require almost a volume by itself to present a true sketch of the debate that occurred upon it. It is my purpose rather to narrate events than to discuss all the various subordinate questions arising from them. "Annexation," is made one of the great motives or causes for war by Mexico, no matter in what way it is effected or attempted. "*Mexico*

CHAPTER VI.

General Almonté demands passports and leaves—Shannon and Rejon and Cuevas—Views of the Mexican cabinet and people—Animosity—Revolt in Mexico—Political condition of Mexico—Her right of reconquering Texas—Mr. Buchanan despatches Mr. Slidell as envoy—rejection of all accommodation between us—The reason why Mexico refused to negotiate, after promising to receive a commissioner from the United States—Subterfuges—Ill feeling in Mexico on the Texas question—Herera overthrown by Paredes—Paredes and the monarchical party—Unpopularity of his scheme—Miserable state of Mexican affairs—Review of the Texas question.

In March, 1845, as soon as congress passed the joint-resolution, Gen. Almonté demanded his passports and departed. A correspondence which took place in Mexico between Mr. Shannon, our envoy, and Señor Rejon, the minister of foreign affairs, relative to the projected union resulted fruitlessly; and, on the 2d of April, Señor Cuevas, who had succeeded Rejon in office, announced to our legation that his government could neither continue diplomatic intercourse with ours, nor maintain friendship with a republic that violated her obligations and usurped a portion of Mexican territory. He declared, moreover, that the relations between the two countries could not be re-established before a complete reparation of that injury should be made.*

would never agree to annexation;"—said Señor Cuevas, the Mexican secretary of foreign affairs, in April, 1845.—Mexico as it was and as it is. p. 391, 4th ed.

* Mexico as it was and as it is—see original letter in 4th ed. p. 387.

This violent and denunciatory language, together with the hint to our minister to depart, was of course not calculated to allay ill-feeling in either country. The Mexican congress was not less bitter in its animadversions, thereby spreading the animosity among the people. It promptly seconded the wishes of the cabinet, and offered two projects, both of which asserted the unalienated rights of Mexico over Texas, and the national resolve to maintain them by force.

Meantime, however, domestic discontent was again brewing. A certain Gen. Rangel attempted to revolutionize the government, and is said to have been favored by the partizans of the late administration. The insurgents seized the palace, capturing the president and three of his ministers of state; but they were speedily overpowered and the insurrection suppressed. In June and July of this year all the Mexican papers were loud in their clamors for vengeance. The minister of war, Garcia Condé, wrote despatch after despatch; and, with the usual spirit of national gasconade, denounced our "perfidy," and continually alluded to "the war which Mexico waged against the United States," in consequence of our "treachery." On the 16th of the latter month, he despatched to the minister of foreign relations and justice a note detailing a plan for covering the national frontiers, and asserted that Mexico would maintain her rights by force, or fall in the struggle. "She will not consent," says he, "to give up one half of her territory from the base fear of losing the other!"

Patriotic and stirring as are these declarations, they cannot but be regarded otherwise than as the most inflated bombast when we recollect that they were made in defiance of the United States, and after a failure for seven years to reconquer even Texas, feeble as she was. What just hope could distracted Mexico reasonably entertain of ultimate victory?

Several years before this period, her discreet statesmen and reflecting citizens privately acknowledged that Texas was lost forever. Pecuniary embarrassments, political misrule, and repeated revolutions had still more impaired her national strength, and yet, an obstinacy as inveterate as it was silly, forced her to make declarations of intended hostilities which only served to kindle and spread the excitement among the masses.

It is just that we should concede to national pride and honor all they reasonably demand of respect, yet I have greatly misunderstood this spirit of our century, if it does not require nations to be as reasonable in their quarrels as individuals. Empires, kingdoms, states, republics, and men, are equally amenable to the great tribunal of the world's common sense, and all are obliged, if they consult their interests, to yield to the force of circumstances they cannot control. What then becomes of the mere abstract and visionary "right of reconquest" which Mexico asserted, even if she really possessed it after the central usurpation, and destruction of the federal system in 1824? What hope was there in a war with the United States, after a failure in that with Texas? It is true that Mexico had the power to annoy us, and procrastinate her fate; she might oppose and resist; she might develope all the evil passions of her people and let them loose on our armies in irregular warfare; but these, after all were nothing more than spiteful manifestations of impotent malice, disgraceful to the nation that encouraged them. The cause of genuine humanity, which, I believe, in our age, truly seeks for peace, demanded the pacification of Texas. The cruelty with which the war was waged, and the brutal treatment received by some of the prisoners of the Santa Fé expedition in 1841 and 1842, convince us that a strong power should have imposed peace on Mexico. National

propriety demanded it; for how long was the "right of reconquest" to continue? England, the proudest nation on earth, acknowledged the independence of the United States after a seven years war. The great powers of Europe interfered to protect oppressed Greece. England has several times interposed in the affairs of Spain and Portugal; and our geographical as well as political affinity to Texas clearly indicated that it was our national interest to establish a firm and friendly government on our border.

There can be no doubt that when General Herrera was, almost unanimously, elected president in August, 1845, he saw things in this light, and was prudently disposed to bend to inevitable fate. Notwithstanding the warlike despatches, speeches, and proclamations of the Mexicans in the earlier part of the year, our secretary of state seems to have sufficiently understood their gasconading habits, to disregard these inflated productions. He therefore authorized Mr. Black, who remained in Mexico as consul, upon Mr. Shannon's withdrawal, to propose that we should send an envoy with full powers to adjust all the questions in dispute between the two countries. Mexico, notwithstanding her open bravado, secretly assented to our proposal, declaring that she would receive "the commissioner of the United States who might come to the capital with full powers to settle the present dispute in a peaceful, reasonable and honorable manner."

Accordingly, Mr. Slidell was hastily despatched so as to be sure of meeting the same persons in power with whom the arrangement had been made; for in Mexico, the delay of even a day may sometimes change a government, and create new or unwilling negotiators. Nevertheless when our minister presented himself in the capital early in December, having travelled rapidly but unostentatiously, so as to

avoid exciting ill feeling among the Mexicans as to the purposes of his mission, he found the secretary unprepared to receive him. It was objected that Mr. Slidell's commission had not been confirmed by the senate of the United States and that the president had no constitutional right to send him; that Mexico agreed to receive a commissioner to settle the Texas dispute, and not a resident envoy; that the reception of such an envoy would admit the minister on the footing of a friendly mission during a period of concord between nations, which would not be diplomatically proper so long as our amity was in the least interrupted;—and, finally, that the government had not expected a commissioner until after the session of congress began in January, 1846.

There may be some force in technical diplomacy, between the mission as agreed on by Messieurs Black and Peña, and the one despatched by Mr. Buchanan, for the letter of credence declares that Mr. Slidell is "*to reside* near the government of the Mexican republic in the quality of envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, and that he is well informed of the president's desire to *restore*, cultivate, and strengthen friendship and good correspondence between us." A point of extreme etiquette raised at such a moment, when both parties were confessedly anxious for peace, naturally excites some inquiry as to its probable origin. Accordingly we find that it was a mere subterfuge, urged by a tottering administration to avert its ruin. The violence of the cabinet against annexation had done its work among the people. When Herrera and Peña accepted, in October, our proposal to treat, they hoped the popular elections, as well as judicious overtures to the departments and citizens, would so modify national opinion as to permit their independent and liberal action. But such forbearance could scarcely be expected from the watchfulness of Mexican intriguers. Herrera

was a federalist, but his failure to proclaim the federal system, and to throw himself on that party as soon as he attained power, alienated a large portion of it and made the rest but feeble supporters. The church and the centralists soon coalesced in hostility to his government; and, although his measures were moderate, and all his efforts designed to correct abuses, yet every political symptom denoted his speedy fall. Of all the popular clamors, probably none was louder in the mob and the army, than that which arose in consequence of his effort to negotiate a peace with our Union. General Paredes took advantage of this unpopularity, and, at the head of five thousand of the soldiery, pronounced against the government of the president.

It will be perceived from this sketch how completely this Texas question and the war with our country have been made electioneering and revolutionary elements in Mexico: not, however, with patriotic hopes, or reasonable expectations of reconquest, but with the contemptible anxiety of usurping a temporary power which, for a while, enabled the aspirant to govern the country without the least prospect of settling the difficulty with us or of regaining Texas.*

This revolution commenced with the army of reserve stationed at San Luis Potosi, and was seconded by the military men generally. On the 15th of December, 1845, Paredes issued a bombastic proclamation† from his head-quarters; and, in the latter part of the month the revolutionary forces reached the capital, when a portion of the garrison pronounced in favor of the insurgent chief. This induced an early accommodation between the parties, and finished the outbreak without bloodshed. Yet Paredes, having over-

* See Mexico as it was and is, 4th ed. p. 396—and Slidell's correspondence with our government. Senate doc. No. 337, 29th cong. 1st sess.

† See Mexico as it was and as it is, p. 400.

thrown Herrera, partly in consequence of his friendly disposition for peace with us, could not now attempt negotiations successfully. Mr. Slidell renewed his offers to the cabinet, but was repulsed and left the country. The lame reliance of Mexico upon bombastic proclamations was again adopted. Yet the people were discontented with Paredes who soon began to manifest the despotic tendency of his nature and education. The military life of this chieftain naturally inclined him towards centralism, but he was altogether unfit either by character or habits for civil authority. As soon as he assumed the reins of government, a party which had long drooped began again to lift its head. The monarchists, led by the Archbishop Manuel Posada y Garduño, and the wily Don Lucas Alaman, soon got possession of the insurgent general. They were joined by a large portion of the higher clergy, some influential men of fortune, a few soldiers, and a number of silly citizens, who promised themselves a futurity of progress and felicity by calling to the Mexican throne a monarch from beyond the sea. This party of royalists was strengthened by dissensions at home, and by the expected attack from the United States. Many reflecting men cherished no hope of national progress so long as the turbulent army was unrestrained by paramount authority. They desired at once to crush freedom and domestic despotism by a foreign prince supported by European soldiery, whilst they believed that the continental sovereigns would greedily seize the opportunity of throwing their forces into America so as to check the aggressive ambition of the United States.* As soon as this scheme of Paredes was disclosed, his unpopularity increased. His intemperate habits were well known and destroyed confidence in his judgment. The financial

* Tributo á la verdad, Vera Cruz, p. 3.

condition of the country was exceedingly embarrassed, and foreigners, who were the usual bankers of the government, refused loans on any terms. Payment was denied by the treasury to all employed in the civil departments, while money was disbursed to none but the army. The freedom of the press moreover was suspended; and, to crown the national difficulties, it was at this very moment that Mexico dreamed of overthrowing the republic at home and establishing a monarchy in its stead, whilst it simultaneously encountered our armies abroad in order to reconquer Texas! With such deplorable fatuity was Mexico misruled, and entangled in a double war upon the rights of her own people and against the United States. It was unfortunate that she fell at this crisis into the hands of a despot and drunkard, whose mind, perplexed between ambition and intemperance, gave a permanent direction to that false public sentiment, which Herrera had been anxious to convert into one of peace and good will towards the United States.

I have thus succinctly narrated the events that led to the war between the United States and Mexico. The annexation of Texas, without the previous assent of Mexico, may have annoyed that government. It was mortifying to patriotic pride, and we should laud the republic for manifesting a proper sensibility. But true national pride is always capable of manly and dignified opposition. It does not expend itself in bravado, petulence or querulousness. It does not assail by threats, but by deeds; and never provokes an attack until it is prepared to return the blow with earnest force. It is silent as the storm until it bursts forth in overwhelming wrath. All other kinds of resistance are nothing but miserable exhibitions of mortified vanity, and invoke the world's contempt instead of respectful compassion.

Our government, from the beginning, desired and at-

tempted to allay excitement, whilst that of Mexico, revolutionary, disorganized and impotent as it was at home, and as it subsequently proved itself to be in the field of battle, did all it could to foment animosity between the two countries. This sturdy resistance of Mexico did not arise from prudence, patriotism or courage, but from intestine factions, exasperated by rival usurpers. Our efforts to make peace and establish a boundary upon the most liberal principles were rejected with disdain.* The authorities, basing their refusal upon a frivolous subterfuge of diplomatic etiquette, would not even hear our proposals, or receive our minister. Our presidents were disposed to concede every thing reasonable in negotiation that could have saved the honor of Mexico and placed our future relations on the salutary foundation of alliance.† Instead of meeting us with the pacific and compromising temper of our age, her demagogue chieftains stimulated the passion and vanity of the mob, until the stormy natures of an ignorant people became so completely excited that they were unable to control the evil spirit raised by their wicked incantations.

Blundering onward and blinded by passion, this unfortunate nation reminds us of that passage in the Ænead wherein the sightless giant is described:—

> "Summo quum monte videmus
> Ipsum inter pecudes vastâ se mole moventem
> Pastorem Polypheum, et littera nota petentem;
> *Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum!*
>
> Ænead, B. 3, v. 655.

* See Wheaton's Elements of international law. ed. of 1836, part 2d chap. 1, pp. 88, 89, 90, 91. On the right of interference of governments for the pacification of belligerent nations.

† Mr. Slidell was fully empowered to negotiate on liberal terms.

BOOK SECOND:

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN TEXAS AND ON THE RIO GRANDE.

BOOK II.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN TEXAS AND ON THE RIO GRANDE.

CHAPTER I.

Boundary of Texas defined by Almonté—Description of Texas—Rivers of Texas—Army of observation—General Taylor—Army of occupation—How formed—Difficulty of landing in Texas—Aransas bay—Army lands at St. Joseph's island—Kinney's rancho—Corpus Christi—State of the army during the winter—sufferings of the troops—Alarms of war—General Gaines's views—Necessity of ample preparation—our first aggressive war.

THE scene of our observation is now about to change from the cabinet to the field. The theatre of war properly attracts our attention, and the spot of earth which was the chief cause of dispute between Mexico and the United States, and where our armies assembled, justly demands our first notice.

Texas, until she attained the rank of an independent State, seems to have been almost an unknown country even to the Mexicans. This was natural for a people who are not essentially agriculturists, but pass their lives as herdsmen, miners, or merchants, and whose central government is far removed from its outposts.

In the year 1834, General Almonté was deputed by the Mexican authorities to visit this northern province, and prepare a statistical report upon its extent and character. According to this valuable document, Texas proper lies between

28° and 35° of north latitude, and 17° and 25° of longitude, west from Washington. It is bounded on the north by the territory of Arkansas; east by Louisiana; south by the Gulf of Mexico and State of Tamaulipas; and west by Coahuila, Chihuahua, and New Mexico. Almonté was informed, by the State government of Coahuila and Texas, that instead of the Rio de las Nueces forming the boundary between Coahuila and Texas, as the map denoted, the true limit commenced at the embouchure of the Rio Aransaso which it followed to its source, whence it continued by a direct line until it reached the junction of the Medina with the San Antonio, and thence proceeded along the eastern bank of the Medina to its source, terminating, finally, on the borders of Chihuahua. The territory comprised within these limits is estimated at near two hundred thousand square miles—a surface almost as extensive as that of France.* But, since Texas receded from the Mexican central government, these confines have been changed. By an act of her congress, in in December, 1836, the boundary was declared to begin at the mouth of the Rio Grande, and thence to run up the principal stream of the said river to its source; thence due north to the 42° of latitude, and thence, along the boundary as defined in the treaty between the United States and Spain, to the beginning.†

The great body of the territory of Mexico is rich in upland vallies, extensive plains, noble mountains, fertile soil, beautiful groves, and rich mines, but it is almost entirely deprived of rivers, whilst Texas is singularly favored in this respect. On the east, the Gulf of Mexico affords her an extensive sea coast indented by the mouths of the Sabine river and lake,

* Almonté's report. Kennedy's Texas, chap. 1.

† Senate doc. 341, 28th cong. 1st sess. p. 56.

the Rio Naches, the Rio Trinidad, the Rio San Jacinto, Galveston bay, the Rio Brazos, Matagorda bay, the Rio Colorado, the Rios San Antonio and Guadelupe, Aransaso bay and the Rio Grande, besides numerous smaller streams that drain her soil and almost cover it with an interlacing net-work of water.

Texas presents to the traveller three distinct natural regions. Along the shores of the gulf from the Sabine to the Rio Grande, a flat country extends from thirty to one hundred miles in the interior, widening towards its centre on the Colorado, and gradually diminishing towards the Nueces. The sandy wastes and lagunes of the coast give place, at some distance in the interior, to a rich alluvial country, diversified by skirts of timber, insulated groves, and open prairies. A large portion of this part of Texas is described as being singularly free from those large collections of stagnant water, which, combined with a burning sun and prolific vegetation, create malaria in our southern States.

Westward of this level skirt, begins the rolling region. The land gradually swells in gentle undulations, "covered with fertile prairies and valuable woodlands, enriched with springs and rivulets." Farther westward still, these beautiful hills tower up into the steeps of the *Sierra Madre*, that great chain of gigantic mountains, which, broken at the junction of the Rio Grande with the Puerco, takes thence a northeasterly course, and enters Texas near the source of the Nueces. These elevations are of the third and fourth magnitude, and abound with forests of pine, oak, cedar, and an extraordinary variety of shrubbery. Wide vallies of alluvial soil, commonly susceptible of irrigation from copious streams in the highlands, wind through the recesses of these mountains and afford a delightful region for the purposes of agriculture. The table lands beyond these ranges have been but

little explored, and still less is known of the northern region extending to the 42° of north latitude, as well as of that portion lying between the Nueces and the Rio Grande. But such, in brief, is Texas from the gulf to the mountains;—a country adapted alike to the planter, the grazier and the farmer, while it offers to commerce a wide extent of sea coast whose harbors may be made perfectly secure by the skill of modern science.*

I have already stated that in 1844 President Tyler stationed an army of observation under General Taylor, at fort Jesup, as soon as he negotiated the annexation treaty.† This corps, but poorly sheltered from the weather, and in an inhospitable climate, was, for a long time, left inactive on the banks of the Sabine. In midsummer of 1845, after the joint resolution was passed, and when our difficulties with Mexico began to thicken, it was at length ordered to advance, under the same commander, towards the southern frontier of Texas. The army then consisted of but two regiments of infantry, one of dragoons, and a single company of artillery, in all about fifteen hundred efficient men. As the climate was known to the sickly, the war department despatched only such an unacclimated force as was deemed absolutely necessary to protect a tropical region in the month of July, awaiting the colder months before its numbers were increased. This body was called the army of occupation, whose appointments seem to have been extremely imperfect. "The dragoon regiment had just been formed from a rifle corps; half of its men were raw, undisciplined recruits, and many of them unable to ride, while their recently purchased horses were small, weak and undrilled. The infantry regiments

* Kennedy's Texas, chap. 1.

† Senate doc. No. 341, 28th cong. 1st sess. p. 76.

were enfeebled by their long exposure, in miserable tents, to the withering heats and drenching rains of a low southern latitude; and the artillerists were without their guns. Towards the end of June, 1845, a company of the last mentioned arm of the service, equipped as infantry, at fort Moultrie, was ordered to New Orleans. This body, armed only with muskets, sailed from Charleston on the 26th of the month, and on its arrival in Louisiana on the 19th of July, found that it was destined for service in Texas. The instructions to the commanding officer informed him that his company was to be mounted and equipped as flying artillery for the campaign under Taylor; that horses would be sent him and a battery shipped from New York, upon the arrival of which he was to join his general at the mouth of the Sabine."* Fortunately for these troops they encountered General Taylor in New Orleans, though they were obliged to depart without their ordnance, which did not reach them for two months afterwards, while their horses were even still longer in attaining their destination.

The war in Texas, and the unsettled state of that country, had prevented the preparation of an accurate map, or indeed, even of a survey of the coasts or interior. It was difficult, therefore, to find any one in New Orleans acquainted with the harbors and rivers of the new State, or who was willing to incur the responsibility of directing the army's steps. The topographical bureau at Washington had, with infinite pains and ingenuity, constructed a map of the country from the scant materials in its possession; but this chart has since been proved to be almost entirely useless as a guide.

However, after considerable difficulty, General Taylor procured a pilot for large wages, who professed a thorough

* An account of the army of observation and occupation, written by one of its officers, in the Southern Quarterly Review for April, 1846.

acquaintance with the Texan waters, and a particular knowledge of his destination at Aransas bay. This individual was immediately put in charge of one of the transports loaded with troops, and under his lead, the commander in chief sailed from New Orleans with three ships and two steamers in search of the port of his disbarkation. The blundering pilot grounded his vessel among the breakers where it would inevitably have been wrecked, had it not been extricated by timely assistance, while the captain of another transport coasted the low shores of the gulf for several days, in sight of land, seeking an inlet, and when his ship was at length anchored off St. Joseph's, he asserted that it was the island of Espiritu Santo.*

This bay of Aransas was perhaps one of the most unsuitable for the disbarkation of troops on the coast of Texas, and was selected in utter ignorance of the country. Indeed we seem to have committed two great and often fatal errors in warfare when we contemplated hostilities with Mexico—first, in despising our foe; and secondly, in failing to inform ourselves of his country's geography.

Aransas bay lies between the south end of St. Joseph's and the northern point of Mustang island, quite close to the latter, and almost at right angles with the coast. It has a narrow but shifting sand bar at its entrance, upon which the depth of water varies according to the action of the winds. The bay is about twenty-five miles in length and twelve in width, but is obstructed by a shoal and a range of islands that traverse it.†

On the third of August our whole army had landed on St. Joseph's island, about thirty miles from the Rio Nueces, across which it was to pass to its proposed encampment on

* S. Q. Review, *ut antea*, p. 442. (April, 1846.)
† Kennedy's Texas, chap. 2d.

Corpus Christi bay, near a smuggling village known as Kinney's *rancho*. As Corpus Christi and Aransas bays are connected by a shallow and winding channel, it was at once discovered that steamers were altogether inadequate for the transportation of troops from the islets to the mainland; and our forces would have remained where they disembarked had not a few skiffs of light draft, together with some sail and row boats, been obtained in the neighborhood at considerable expense. In these frail vessels a detachment of forty men, armed only with muskets, crossed the Nueces, and landed on the stormy coast as pioneers in a country asserted to be Mexican. Had the authorities of that republic been prepared to resist our landing, a few field pieces might have prevented the alleged invasion, as our general was unable to protect the disembarkation of his troops by cannon. In addition to these mistakes, the 2d regiment of dragoons was not despatched from fort Jesup in time to co-operate with our forces when they first landed at Corpus Christi; and, as the artillery had not yet been forwarded from our arsenals, the campaign may be said to have commenced with *infantry alone*. This was a novelty in military science, and indicated an ignorance of war, an unpardonable imprudence, or a conviction that the whole drama was got up only to intimidate an enemy we despised.

It is impossible to narrate every circumstance of interest that occurred during the encampment of our forces west of the Neuces, a position taken by General Taylor with the concurrence of the war department. But a history of this war would be incomplete were not the position as well as the condition of our army accurately stated. Our government, relying probably on the acknowledged feebleness of Mexico, and on the fact that she had not yet declared war, imagined

that the mere presence of American troops would pacify Texas or prevent hostilities. This was an unfortunate mistake, especially in the unsettled condition of things; for in May, 1845, Mr. Donelson, our chargé to Texas, had warned the government to be prepared for an immediate blow upon Mexico, if she should unfortunately declare war against us, and that declaration might have been expected at any moment.

The details of the organization of our forces seem, nevertheless, to have been sadly neglected. Sailing vessels, alone, were relied on to convey despatches to General Taylor; and, from the wreck of one of them, a drummer boy, strolling along the beach, on the 15th of August, rescued a valuable package containing the proclamation of the Mexican government in which the people were summoned to unite in an army for national preservation, under the sonorous title of "Defenders of independence and the laws."* The day after this despatch was received, the smugglers along the coast reported that Arista was rapidly advancing to attack us with three thousand choice troops. Without artillery to defend the camp, or dragoons to act as scouts, our general could do nothing but order entrenchments to be thrown up. Entrenching tools, however, had not been furnished; and, with only a few old and broken spades the troops labored briskly, and erected, in a few days, a solid field-work a few yards from the beach, protected in the rear by the bay. But the battery had not yet arrived, nor was Gen. Taylor able to obtain from the sloop of war St. Mary's, which was on the station, any guns of a suitable calibre. Fortunately, however, he procured three pieces, indifferently equipped, and a small supply of ammunition, from the citizens of Corpus Christi. These guns added materially to the strength of our position

* Niles' Reg. vol. 68, p. 305.

in case we were attacked, but were entirely unsuitable for field service.*

The proclamation to which we have alluded, and the rumors of vigorous hostility on the part of Mexico, produced great alarm in the United States, especially along our southern frontier. In New Orleans, indignation was openly expressed that our gallant men had been despatched on this forlorn enterprize without the amplest means of defence and attack, while our arsenals were filled with all the munitions of war. A large force of volunteers was, therefore, ordered out in the south, while two companies of artillery were immediately despatched to Taylor's succor under the command of Maj. Gally.

The report of Arista's progress, however, proved to be false, so that we were fortunately saved from attack. Yet the sufferings of our army did not cease with those military inconveniences. "Two thirds of the tents furnished our soldiers were worn out or rotten, and had been condemned by boards of survey appointed by the proper authorities in accordance with the army regulations. Transparent as gauze, they afforded little or no protection against the intense heat of summer or the drenching rains and severe cold of winter. Even the dews penetrated the thin covering almost without obstruction. Such were the tents provided for campaigners in a country almost deluged three months in the year, and more variable in its climate than any other region, passing from the extreme of heat to that of cold in a few hours. During the whole of November and December, either the rains were descending with violence, or the furious "northers" which ravage this coast were breaking the frail tent-poles or rending the rotten canvas. For days and weeks every article in hun-

† S. Q. Rev. *ut antea.* Senate doc. No. 337, 29th cong. 1st sess. p. 93.

dreds of tents was thoroughly soaked; and during these terrible months, the sufferings of the sick, in the crowded hospital tents, were indescribably horrible. Every day added to the frightfulness of the mortality. At one time a sixth of the entire camp was on the sick list, and at least one-half unfit for service, in consequence of dysentery and catarrhal fevers which raged like a pestilence."* The camp was without fires, and, being situated on the edge of a vast prairie sparsely covered with muskeet trees, was but scantily supplied with wood even for the most needful purposes. The quarter-master's department furnished only the weak and stunted *mustangs* of the country; and the little and inefficient ponies, geared in the large harness made at the north for American horses, looked as if they would jump through their collars instead of use them for traction. With such teams only a sufficiency of wood could be drawn for cooking, and none for camp fires to comfort the sick and suffering soldiers. "As winter advanced, the prairie became a quagmire, the roads almost impassable, and as the *mustangs* died in large numbers, wood enough for cooking even, could not be procured. The encampment now resembled a marsh, the water, at times, being three or four feet deep in the tents of whole wings of regiments. All military exercises were suspended, and the bleak gloomy days were passed in inactivity, disgust and sullenness. The troops, after being thoroughly drenched all day, without fires to dry them, lay down at night in wet blankets on the soaked ground, as plank for tent floors was not furnished by the quartermasters until the rainy season was over. At times the men, at tattoo, gasped for breath in the sultry night air, and, at reveillee, found their moist blankets frozen around them and their

* S. Q. Rev. *ut antea.*

tents stiff with ice. A portion of the men were kept without pay for six months, and the rest for four months, although the law strictly requires payment every two months.

"Officers and soldiers, destitute of funds, were compelled to borrow, upon the strength of pay due, of their more fortunate companions, or of the Shylocks, in search of victims, that polluted the camp. Sick soldiers, directed by their surgeons to return to the United States, had either to remain and die, or to submit to exhorbitant exactions from unfeeling villians in their pension certificates and pay accounts, though the law requires the paymasters to cash them in specie.

"On the first landing of the 3d and 4th infantry at Corpus Christi, "Kinney's Rancho," though a lawless, smuggling town, under the vigorous sway of its martial proprietor, was as quiet and peaceful as a village in New England. But every fresh arrival of troops was followed by some portion of that vast horde of harpies, that are ever to be found in the train of all armies, ready to prey upon the simple and unsuspecting among the soldiers. In a short time, hundreds of temporary structures were erected on the outskirts of the "Rancho," and in them, all the cut-throats, thieves, and murderers of the United States and Texas, seem to have congregated. No sight could have been more truly melancholy than that of their bloated and sin-marked visages, as they lounged through the purlieus of this modern Pandemonium. The air, by day, was polluted with their horrid oaths and imprecations,—and the savage yells, exulting shouts, and despairing groans of their murderous frays, made night hideous. But, not content with confining their hellish deeds to their own worthy fraternity, they laid their worthless hands on the troops. Many of the soldiers, enticed to their dram-shops, were drugged with stupifying portions, and then robbed of their hard earnings, or murdered in cold blood."

General Taylor, looking to the probability of a movement against Mexico, warned the department that a ponton train was indispensable in a country wherein streams abounded and wood for bridges was scarce; but it was not despatched until after the next meeting of congress.

"Six months after the army had taken the field, there were not teams and wagons enough to transport one half of the troops; so that, in case of hostilities, had a forward movement been ordered, it could only have been effected by detachments, and, in consequence, that most fatal of all military errors would have been committed, of permitting the enemy to attack and beat in detail. The few teams furnished, it is natural to think, were the choicest to be found in the west. For, it had been said, that though the "Army of occupation" was small, the great celerity of its movements, from the superiority of the American horses, would contribute, as well as the greater bravery of its men, to make it more than a match for the largest Mexican force. Ninety yoke of oxen and several hundred mustangs were therefore bought, but not a single American horse!

"Three batteries of artillery were added to the one which, at length reached the company from Charleston. Horses were sent with two of them, to manœuvre them rapidly on the field of battle, and to transport them wherever the army might go. But the third came unprovided with cavalry.

"When the New Orleans volunteers left Corpus Christi, their artillery horses were turned over to the company from Charleston. This company, having always acted as infantry, had never even seen a flying artillery drill,—half of the men could not ride,—many had never ridden at all, and, in mounting for the first time, made Mr. Winkle's mistake as to which stirrup to use. It was certainly an original idea,

to convert, *in a single day*, a company of foot into light artillery. However, as horses had at length been given to the company from Charleston, it was the ardent desire of the lieutenant commanding, to teach his men to ride and drive, and the sabre exercise. This the loyal quartermasters resolved to prevent, and, at the same time, to show the world how economical they were. They, therefore, refused to purchase any more hay and told the dragoons and light artillery, that they, themselves, must cut and haul the dry and sapless broom straw of the prairie, and forage their horses on that."*

Such is a picture of the sufferings of our army of occupation, drawn by an eye-witness, and scarcely colored by the warmth of his feelings. If the advice of military men, and the opinion of persons whose experience as campaigners entitled them to respect, had been heeded, this war would have been speedily ended. Ever since the rumor of annexation in 1843, but, especially, since the inaugural address of President Polk in 1845, in which he pronounced so emphatic an opinion as to our right to the whole of Oregon, our political firmament had been clouded. Prudent men thought it probable that there would be war with Mexico or hostilities with England, and that the two sources of irritation, by distracting our powers, would materially increase each other's virulence.

At this time, General Gaines, a chieftain who has become venerable in the service of his country, and whose skill and bravery on many a field have manifested his character in actions that no citizen can ever forget, commanded on our south-western frontier. The delicate character of our foreign relations, to which allusion has just been made, attracted his

* Southern Quarterly Review, *ut antea*. These statements are made by an able and distinguished officer of our army, who was on the field, and is perfectly versed in all the matters he discusses.

anxious attention in 1845; and his responsibility as Chief on a long, exposed frontier, compelled him to give timely warning to the department. It seemed to this officer, if we engaged hastily in war with Mexico or England, at such a crisis, and with no preparations either for an army or its instruction, that the conflict would be disastrous or procrastinated, especially as the latter power had so far surpassed us in applying steam to naval purposes. Long years of peace had rendered us indifferent to war; and unvarying success in other conflicts had made us confident. Accordingly, he recommended the concentration of a large force of volunteers on the borders of the probable theatre of war, where they should be trained in military science, together with the regulars commanded by General Taylor, until the spring of 1846. If war could not be averted before that period, we might then be able to march against the enemy with a powerful and disciplined army. He contended that the true policy of our country, in such an assault, was to pursue with relentless energy the military bandits who swayed the destinies of Mexico, whilst, on all sides, we protected the persons and property of non-combatants; so that in pushing onward to the capital we would leave throughout the country traversed an indelible impression of our justice. Thus the confidence of the best portions of Mexico would be secured, the *prestige* of her army promptly destroyed, and peace obtained before she was able to rally. On the other hand, General Gaines believed that if we began war without large and instructed forces, we might count on a protracted struggle, as in the Seminole campaigns from 1836 to 1842. The precipices upon the doubtful verge of whose summits we tottered during the war, prove the wisdom of these suggestions. The faithful page of history admonishes that nations as well as individuals who recklessly disregard the essential maxims

that prescribe their prudent duties, must sooner or later pay the penalty of neglect. But politicians, uneducated even in the pleasant discipline of militia trainings, do not view matters in the same light as military men whose knowledge of detail, and of the responsibilities of real service, make them unwilling to engage in war, or even to threaten hostilities, without the amplest preparation to perform all they promise. Without such true and earnest discipline warlike array is but a military cheat.

It is vain to predict what might have been the result had the advice of the gallant and prudent Gaines been adopted; yet it cannot be doubted that a well equipped body of twenty-five or thirty thousand men would have marched to the city of Mexico and dictated peace at the cost of one fourth the blood and treasure that were subsequently expended. A lingering policy of hesitation together with the acknowledged inefficiency of Mexico, may palliate the errors of our cabinet; but wise politicians will not henceforth fail to be impressed with the necessity of military preparation which this conflict has taught us.

A war which was originally supposed to be one exclusively of defence, was suddenly changed to an aggressive conflict, and is, perhaps, an additional excuse for our unpreparedness. Most of the events in this narrative derive peculiar interest from the fact that it is the first and only offensive war into which we have been forced. With every known principle of defence we had been long acquainted; for, in the school of Washington, we acquired a sound, practical knowledge, which subsequent experience, under the most perfect system of self-government, enabled us to improve. But it is to be hoped that many years will elapse before our volunteers will be again called from their peaceful duties to take part in an

aggressive war, and especially against a government whose theory of rule is the same as our own.

NOTE.—General Gaines, who commanded the western division, was censured by the War department for having made a requisition on the governor of Louisiana for State troops to be sent to the army in Texas under Taylor's command, at the moment of apprehended danger described in this chapter. General Taylor, for more than a year previous to September, 1845, commanded one of the brigades of Gaines's division, and the latter never knew *by authority* that the former had been disconnected from him, except upon temporary service, until advised by the secretary of war on the 13th of September. He never received a copy of the authority given to Taylor to go to Texas until after the date of his requisition for Louisiana volunteers, on the 15th of August, 1845; consequently he *then* considered himself responsible for the strength and support of one of his own brigades, and bound to succor it speedily when he believed it to be in imminent danger.—See Senate doc. No. 378, for his correspondence, and especially p. 48.

CHAPTER II.

Our position at Corpus Christi—Instructions to Taylor as to the boundary of the Rio Grande—Taylor's views—Review and history of the boundary question—Letter from Mr. Adams—Santa Anna's agreements with Texas, &c.—March to the Rio Grande ordered—Justification in a military point of view of the occupation of the disputed territory—Anecdote of Frederick the Great—War in Silesia and Austria—Madison's conduct to Spain in 1810—Right of declaration of war—Justifiable causes of war—Opinion of Sir J. Mackintosh—War and diplomacy contrasted.

One of the most inclement winters in the Gulf of Mexico had passed in the comfortless manner described in the last chapter. Our attempts to negotiate with Mexico were repulsed, and although our minister had not yet returned to the United States—having delayed at Jalapa with the hope of finding Paredes more accessible than Herrera—every thing indicated an ultimate defeat of diplomacy.

Meanwhile our forces at Corpus Christi were gradually augmenting, under the command of Generals Taylor and Worth. In October, 1845, the troops amounted to near four thousand, and General Taylor made every preparation, by reconnoissances between the Nueces and the Rio Grande for the ultimate defence of soil which had been claimed by our government as part of Texas.*

* On the 15th of June, 1845, Mr. Bancroft, as acting secretary of state, wrote to General Taylor as follows:

"The point of your ultimate destination is the western frontier of Texas, where you will select and occupy, on or near the Rio Grande del Norte, such a site as will consist with the health of the troops, and will be best adapted to repel invasion, and to protect what, in the event of annexation, will be our western border."

On the 30th of July, 1845, the secretary of war, Mr. Marcy, declared to

As a military man it was not his duty to affix the boundaries that were to be the subject of negotiation or war; but simply to ascertain precisely the extent of defence required along a disputed territory, and to dispose his troops accordingly.*

In October, 1845, therefore, General Taylor reviewed the instructions from the war department, and, seeing that he had been ordered to select and occupy near the Rio Grande such a site as would consist with the health of the troops, and was best adapted to repel invasion, he ventured to suggest an advance of his army. This however, was done by him whilst he felt great diffidence in touching topics that might become matter of delicate diplomacy. Nevertheless, taking a soldier's view of the topographical and not the dip-

him that "the Rio Grande is claimed to be the boundary between the two countries, and up to this boundary you are to extend your protection, only excepting any posts on the eastern side thereof which are in the actual occupancy of Mexican forces, or Mexican settlements over which the republic of Texas did not exercise jurisdiction at the period of annexation, or shortly before that event. It is expected that, in selecting the establishment for your troops, you will approach as near the boundary line—the Rio Grande—as prudence will dictate. With this view, the President desires that your position, for a part of your forces, at least, should be west of the river Nueces."

This, and even more forcible language, was repeated in letters from the same source on the 23d and 30th of August, and on the 16th of October, 1845. In the last letter the secretary of war states distinctly that the western boundary of Texas is the Rio Grande. See Senate doc. No. 337, 29th cong. 1st sess. pp. 75, 77, 80, 81, 82.

* That this was General Taylor's view of the question is proved by a remark in his letter to General Ampudia on the 12th of April, 1846, on being warned by that officer to break up his camp and to retire to the other bank of the Nueces. General Taylor says: I need hardly advise you that charged as I am, *in only a military capacity, with the performance of specific duties, I cannot enter into a discussion of the international question involved in the advance of the American army.*—id. p. 124.

lomatic question, he informed our government, that if it made the Rio Grande an *ultimatum* in adjusting a boundary, he doubted not that the settlement would be facilitated by taking possession, at once, of one or two suitable points on, or quite near, that river. At these spots, our strength would be displayed in a manner not to be mistaken, while the position of our troops at the remote camp of Corpus Christi, with arid wastes between them and the outposts of Mexico, altogether failed to impress that government with our readiness to vindicate by force of arms our title to the country as far as the Rio Grande.* Moreover, General Taylor felt encumbered by the orders from our war department of the 8th July, in which he was told that Mexico held military establishments on the east side of the Rio Grande, whose forces he should not disturb until our peaceful relations were finally destroyed.†

Accordingly, on the 13th of January, 1846, our commander-in-chief was directed to advance with his troops to the Rio Grande.‡ This movement was made in consequence of the anticipated failure of our negotiations, clearly indicated by the conduct of the Mexican government immediately upon the arrival of Mr. Slidell in the capital. But before these orders were despatched to General Taylor, he had already in August, 1845, been apprised of his duties in the event of hostile demonstrations on the part of the enemy. In case of an invasion of Texas by the Mexicans, he was directed to drive them back beyond the Rio Grande; and, although it was desirable that he should confine himself as much as possible to defensive measures, yet, in the event of such a repulse, he was authorized to seize and hold possession of Matamoros and other places on the soil of Mexico.

This resolution of our government was made the subject

* See Senate Doc. No. 337, 29th cong. 1st sess. p. 99.
† Id. p. 75. ‡ Id. p. 82.

of grave complaint by persons who opposed the war. The order to advance from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande was alleged to be an act of invasion, and consequently, that *hostilities* were commenced by us and not by Mexico.

It may be pardoned if we pause awhile to consider a subject of such vital importance. The solution of the question was placed by one party upon the determination whether the Rio Grande was the boundary between Texas and Mexico before the battle of San Jacinto; and, if not, whether it has been made so since by competent authority. Up to that period it was asserted to be a recognized fact that the Nueces was the western boundary of Texas. Mr. John Quincy Adams, in his controversy with Don Luis De Onis, upon the Spanish boundary question, in March, 1818;* and Messieurs Pinckney and Monroe, in their argument with Cevallos at Madrid in April, 1805,† claimed the Rio Grande as the true limit between the United States and Mexico, by virtue of the ancient rights of France and the treaties between that sovereignty and the Spanish king.‡ It was asserted,

* American State papers, vol. 4, p. 468.

† Id. vol. 2, p. 662.

‡ As it may be important that the reader should understand the title to Louisiana under which the boundary of the Rio Grande was claimed, the following is a summary of its history. Louisiana originally belonged to France, but by a secret compact between that country and Spain in 1762, and by treaties, in the following year, between France, Spain, and England, the French dominion was extinguished on all the continent of America. In consequence of the treaty between this country and England in 1783, the Mississippi became the western boundary of the United States from its source to the 31° of north latitude, and thence, on the same parallel to the St. Mary's. France, it will be remembered, always had *claimed* dominion in Louisiana to the Rio Bravo or Rio Grande, by virtue

1st. Of the discovery of the Mississippi from near its source to the ocean.

2d. *Of the possession taken, and establishment made by La Salle, at the bay of St. Bernard, west of the rivers Trinity and Colorado, by authority of Louis XIV, in* 1685; notwithstanding the subsequent destruction of the colony.

therefore, that by the cession of Louisiana all the rights of France over Texas, as an integral part of her territory, accrued to us; and consequently that when the State of Texas was united to this country it was only *re*-annexed with what were *claimed* to be its ancient limits. But this was not a

3d. Of the charter of Louis XIV, to Crozat in 1712.

4th. The historical authority of Du Pratz, Champigny, and the Count de Vergennes.

5th. Of the authority of De Lisle's map, and of the map published in 1762 by Don Thomas Lopez, *geographer to the king of Spain*, as well as of various other maps, atlases, and geographical and historical authorities.

By an article of the secret treaty of San Ildefonso, in October, 1800, Spain retroceded Louisiana to France; yet this treaty was not promulgated till the beginning of 1802. The paragraph of cession is as follows: "His Catholic majesty engages to retrocede to the French republic, six months after the full and entire execution of the conditions and stipulations above recited relative to his Royal Highness, the Duke of Parma, the colony and province of Louisiana, with the same extent that it already has in the hands of Spain, *and that it had when France possessed it*, and such as it should be, after the treaties passed subsequently between Spain and other powers." In 1803, Bonaparte, the first consul of the French republic, ceded Louisiana to the United States, as fully and in the same manner as it had been retroceded to France by Spain in the treaty of San Ildefonso; and, by virtue of this grant, Messieurs Madison, Monroe, Adams, Clay, Van Buren, and Jackson contended that the original limits of the state had been the Rio Grande. However, by the 3rd article of our treaty with Spain in 1819, all our pretensions to extend the territory of Louisiana towards Mexico or the Rio Grande, were resigned and abandoned by adopting the River Sabine as our southern confine in that quarter. See Lyman's diplomacy of the United States. Vol. 1, p. 368, and vol. 2. p. 136.

The following extract from a valuable letter with which the author was favored by Ex-President Adams, who, as secretary of state, conducted the negotiations with Spain, will explain his opinions and acts upon a subject of so much importance.

QUINCY, 7th July, 1847.

* * * * * * * * *

"Whoever sets out with an inquiry respecting the right of territories in the American hemisphere claimed by Europeans, must begin by settling

true statement of the controversy, for after our treaty with Spain the aspect of the affair changed. The question then was no longer what had been the boundary under the laws between France and Spain, or between Spain and the United States,—but what were the limits either under the

certain conventional principles of right and wrong before he can enter upon the discussion.

"For example what right had Columbus to Cat Island, otherwise called Guanahani? Who has the right to it now and how came they by it? The flag of St. George and the Dragon now waves over it; but who had the right to take possession of it because Christopher Columbus found it,—the paltriest island in the midst of the ocean. European statesmen, warriors, and writers on what are called the laws of nations, have laid down a system of laws upon which they found this right. Have the Carribee Indians, in whose possession that Island was discovered by Columbus, ever assented to that system of right and wrong?

"You remember that Hume, in commencing his history of England by the Roman conquest says—"that without seeking any more justifiable reasons of hostility than were employed by the later Europeans in subjecting the Africans and the Americans, they sent over an army under the command of Plautius, an able general, who gained some victories, and made a considerable progress in subduing the inhabitants." Then, no European has ever had any better right to take possession of America, than Julius Cæsar and the Romans had to take possession of the island of Britain.

"What then was the right either of France or Spain to the possession of the province of Texas? To come to any question of right between the parties upon the subject you must agree upon certain conventional principles: where and when your question of right must become applicable to the facts; and, as between them, it was a disputed question, and had been so from the discovery of the mouth of the Mississippi river by La Salle, and from his second expedition to find the mouth of the Mississippi coming from the ocean, in which he perished.

"Spain had prior claims to the country, but the claim of France was founded upon the last voyage of La Salle, and by extending a supposed derivative right, from the spot where La Salle landed half way to the nearest Spanish settlement.

"Mr. Monroe and Mr. Charles Pinckney, in their correspondence with Cevallos, assumed this as a settled principle between European nations, in the discussion of right to American territory. It was not contested, but

colonial government of the Mexican viceroyalty, or under the laws of Mexico, when she became an independent republic. It was asserted that no map or geography existed since the establishment of the republic that did not lay down the boundary north of the Rio Grande. The map of Texas, compiled by Stephen H. Austin, the parent of Texan colonization, published at Philadelphia in 1835, and setting forth all the Mexican grants in Texas, represents the Rio Nueces as the western boundary. General Almonté in 1834, as I have previously stated, alleged, upon the authority of the State government of Coahuila and Texas that the boundary between them was even east of the Nueces. This was probably in accordance with the ancient Spanish division; for, in 1805 Cevallos declared to our ministers at Madrid that the province of Texas, "where the Spaniards have had settlements from the 17th century, was bounded on the east by Louisiana, and contains the extensive country which lies between the river Medina *where the government of Coahuila ends*, and the post now abandoned." Authorities to this

was not assented to on the part of Spain; and, having found it laid down by Messieurs Monroe and Pinckney, I argued upon it, and it was never directly answered by Don Luis De Onis, who could not controvert it without going to the Pope's Bull.†

"As between France and Spain therefore, I maintained that the question of right, had always been disputed and never was settled, from which opinion I have not since varied. That we had a shadow of right beyond the Sabine I never believed since the conclusion of the Florida treaty, and, it is from the date of that treaty, that Great Britain had not a shadow of right upon the Oregon territory until we have been pleased to confer it upon her."

* * * * * * * * *

"I am, dear sir, with great respect, your very obedient servant,

J. Q. ADAMS."

To Brantz Mayer, Esq., Baltimore."

† Alexander VIth's Bull of Donation.

effect might be extensively multiplied.* Brazos de Santiago was a Mexican port of entry, which continued to be held up to the period of hostilities, and Laredo was a small Mexican town, occupied by a Mexican garrison. If such was the geographical division between Texas and Mexico on the lower Rio Grande, near its mouth in the gulf, it was asserted that there could be infinitely less right to claim it as a limit nearer its source, since Santa Fé, the capital of New Mexico, had never been within the jurisdiction of Texas, and since the boundaries of Chihuahua commenced near the head waters of the Nueces.

These were some of the arguments used by individuals who deemed the march to Point Isabel an invasion of Mexican territory. It is just that a few reasons should also be presented on behalf of those who believed it to be lawful or expedient.

When Santa Anna was captured after the battle of San Jacinto in 1836, the leading men in Texas had great difficulty in rescuing him from popular vengeance for the massa-

* See "Matthew Carey's general map of the world,"—29th map—published 1814.—Kennedy's Texas, p. 4.—Mrs. Holley's Texas.—History of Texas, by D. B. Edwards, preceptor of Gonzales Seminary, Texas, 1836, p. 14. He says:—"Texas is bounded on the north by Red river, which divides it from Arkansas, Ozark District, and New Mexico; on the south by the Gulf of Mexico and the Rio de las Nueces, *which divides it from the States of Coahuila and Tamaulipas;* on the east by the eastern branch of the river Sabine and the State of Louisiana; on the west by the State of Coahuila and the territory of New Mexico."

Accompanying the work is a map of Texas with boundaries, as laid down above. In a note on one corner of the map, speaking of the Rio Grande, he says: "*If* this river should ever become the western boundary of Texas (as desired by the inhabitants) it will add a hundred miles to its sea-coast and fifty thousand square miles to its superficies; the southern section of the surface is sandy, barren prairie, almost destitute of water; and its northern rocky, sterile mountains, nearly as destitute of timber."

cres he had committed. The victory over the central chief—the despot and dictator of Mexico—was generally believed to be a crowning measure of success, for the bitter persecutor soon dwindled into the humble supplicant, and pledged his name and his oath to secure the independence of the rebellious State. Accordingly, with every appearance and promise of good faith and honor, he executed contracts with the Texan authorities which deserve consideration in discussing this question. On the 14th of May, 1836, at Velasco, two of these documents were signed by Santa Anna, Burnet, Collingsworth, Hardiman and Grayson,—the first being a public, and the second a secret convention between the parties. The third article of the first paper stipulates that the Mexican troops shall evacuate the *territory* of Texas, *passing to the other side of the Rio Grande*, while the fourth article of the secret agreement declares that a treaty of amity, commerce and limits shall be made between Mexico and Texas, *the territory of the latter power not to extend beyond the Rio Bravo del Norte, or Rio Grande.* In conformity with these contracts, Texas set free the prisoner, whose "prompt release and departure for Vera Cruz," according to their tenor, "were necessary for the fulfilment of his *solemn oath*," to obtain a recognition of the independence of Texas, and to dispose the Mexican cabinet for the reception of commissioners.*

Santa Anna returned to his country in disgrace after his disastrous campaign, and lurked in retirement at his farm until the French attacked Vera Cruz, when he threw himself again at the head of the departmental forces. In the action he fortunately lost a limb, and by the skilful display of his mutilation in defence of Mexico, he renewed his

* Primera Campaña de Tejas: by Ramon Martinez Caro, secretary of Santa Anna, pp. 122, 125.

claims to national gratitude. Instead, however, of using his influence to obtain the treaty, promised as the boon for his life, he became at once the bitterest foe of Texas, and pledged himself to fight "forever for its reconquest." Texas, meanwhile, acting in good faith, and presuming to adopt the spirit and letter of the convention with Santa Anna, whom she naturally regarded as the dictator of Mexico, passed the act of December 19, 1836, establishing the Rio Grande as her boundary from the gulf to its source. Besides this, her congress created senatorial and representative districts west of the Nueces; organized and defined limits of counties extending to the Rio Grande; created courts of justice; spread her judicial system over the country wherever her people roamed, and performed other acts of sovereignty which we are compelled not to disregard. It cannot be contended that these acts and agreements were alone sufficient, under the laws of nations, to confer upon Texas unquestionable rights over the soil between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, for a contract with the captive president and general was not legally binding; but it is equally clear that all these arguments of the old authorities as to the original boundary, and all the new claims set up by Texas, under her statutes, as well as stipulations with Santa Anna, made that territory a disputed ground whose real ownership could only be equitably settled by negotiation. The strong language of both the contracts, just recited, seems to *concede* the fact that the president of Mexico regarded, at least the lower Rio Grande, as already the real boundary between Mexico and Texas, notwithstanding the opinion of Almonté in 1834; and consequently that it was neither the subject of treaty or agreement at that moment, nor could it become so afterwards when commissioners were appointed.

When Texas was annexed to the United States she was

received with these asserted limits, though she did not join the Union with any specific boundaries.* It was thought best by both parties to leave the question of confines open between Mexico and our country, so as not to complicate the national entanglements. After the congress of the United States and convention in Texas had acted upon the joint resolution it was impossible for us to recede. The course of our presidents, therefore, was at once pacific and soothing towards Mexico. For although they believed that republic had no right to be consulted as to the annexation of Texas, a free and independent State, they nevertheless admitted all her natural and just privileges in regard to boundary. Mr. Tyler and Mr. Polk therefore despatched envoys to Mexico with the offer of liberal negotiations as soon as a favorable opportunity presented itself. But the chargé and minister of Mr. Tyler were scornfully rejected, while Mr. Slidell, as has been already related, was refused an audience upon frivolous pretences at a moment when the Mexican secretary was secretly craving to receive him.†

In such a juncture what was the duty of the United States? It is an easy matter for speculative philosophers or political critics to find fault with the conduct of statesmen

* Mr. Donelson wrote to Mr. Buchanan on the 2d July, 1845, from Washington, Texas, as follows: "*My position is* that we can hold Corpus Christi and all other points up the Nueces. If attacked, the right of defence will authorise us to expel the Mexicans to the Rio Grande. It is better for us to await the attack than incur the risk of embarrassing the question of annexation with the consequences of immediate possession of the territory on the Rio Grande. * * * The government left for treaty arrangement the boundary question in the propositions for a definitive treaty of peace. H. of R. doc. No. 2, 29th cong. 1st sess. pp. 78, 79.

† I am informed by Mr. Parrott, the secretary of legation who accompanied Mr. Slidell, that no form of letters of credence—or evidence of powers as "*commissioner to settle the Texan dispute*," would have secured a hearing for our envoy. The mob, the army, and Paredes were determined that no missionary of peace should be received from the United States.

and to become prophets of woe *after* the occurrence of events they deprecate. But such men are timid actors on the world's stage, and especially in such a theatre of folly as the Mexican republic. Governments have but two ways of settling international disputes,—either by negotiation or war,—and, even the latter must be concluded by diplomacy, for nations rarely fight until one of them is completely annihilated. Negotiation, or the attempt to negotiate, had been completely exhausted by us. Meanwhile Mexico continued to excite our curiosity by spasmodic struggles in nerving her people for the war, as well as by gasconading despatches which breathed relentless animosity to our country for the annexation of Texas. Nevertheless, this sensitive and vaunting nation would neither make peace, establish boundaries, negotiate, nor declare war. Was it reasonable that such a frantic state of things should be permitted to continue? Could this perverse aversion to fighting or friendship be tolerated? Were our countries to conclude an eternal compact of mutual hatred and non intercourse? Was such childish obstinacy and weakness to be connived at in our country? Was it due to common sense, justice, or the preservation of a good neighborhood that we should remain supine under insane threats and dishonorable treatment? We asserted that, upon the Texas question, we had rightly no dispute with Mexico, except as to the boundary involved in the territory our forces were then occupying or about to cross. We did not design discussing our right to annex Texas. That was an act accomplished and unalterable. It was, doubtless, exceedingly convenient for Mexico to maintain this pacific state of *quasi-war* and to reject, alike, our amity and hostilities, as long as she owed us many millions of dollars and refused either to pay principal or interest, or to conclude a treaty for the settlement of unadjusted claims.

Whilst her government was able to enforce non-intercourse, it was free from importunity and payment. But this adroit scheme of insolvency was unjust to our citizens, and only served to augment the liabilities of Mexico. What then remained to be done? The reply may be found in a significant anecdote related by Mr. Adams in a speech in congress on the Oregon question, on the 2d of January, 1846.

"After negotiating"—said he—"for twenty years about this matter we may take possession of the subject matter of negotiation. Indeed, we may negotiate after we take possession, and this is the military way of doing business. When Frederick the Great came to the throne of Prussia he found that his father had equipped for him an army of a hundred thousand men. Meeting soon after the Austrian minister, the latter said to him: "Your father has given you a great army, but ours has seen the wolf, whilst your majesty's has not." "Well—well!" exclaimed Frederick, "I will soon give it an opportunity to see the wolf!" Frederick then added, in his memoirs:—"I had some excellent old *pretensions* to an Austrian province, which some of my ancestors owned one or two centuries before; accordingly I sent an ambassador to the court of Austria stating my claim, and presenting a full exposition of my right to the province. The same day my ambassador was received in Vienna, I entered Silesia with my army!"*

* The *claim* of Frederick the IInd to Silesia was considered *plausible*. As Bohemia renounced not only the possession, but all its rights to Silesia by the treaties of Breslau and Berlin and other subsequent treaties, the kings of Prussia pretended, that by virtue of the renunciation, they became sovereign dukes of the country and not subject to the emperor in their new character. To this claim it was replied that Bohemia being an imperial State, could not, of its own authority, destroy the feudal tenure by which Silesia was attached to it, and through it to the empire. The question was rendered more intricate, for one party considered Bohemia feudal only as

Such would be a prompt and impulsive answer to the manifold prevarications of seditious Mexico. But the army we advanced and the country we occupied, were neither the army of Frederick nor the pleasant vales of rich and populous Silesia. A nearly desolate waste, stretched from the Nueces to the Rio Grande, barren alike in soil and inhabitants, and tempting none to its dreary wilderness but nomadic *rancheros* or outlaws who found even Mexico no place of refuge for their wickedness. It was, surely, not a land worthy of bloodshed, and yet, in consequence of its sterility, it became of vast importance on a frontier across whose wide extent enemies might pass unobserved and unmolested. With the entire command of the Rio Grande from its source to its mouth in the hands of our enemy, and the whole of this arid region flanking the stream and interposing itself between Mexico and our troops, it is evident that our adversaries would possess unusual advantages over us either for offensive or defensive war. The mere control of the embouchure of the river was no trivial superiority, for, on a stormy and inhospitable coast, it was almost impossible to support an effectual blockade and thus prevent the enemy from being succored along his whole frontier with arms and provisions from abroad. By seizing, however, the usual points of transit and entrance on the lower Rio Grande many of these evils might be avoided; and, if Mexico ultimately resolved on hostilities, we should be enabled to throw our forces promptly across the river, and by rapid marches

to the electoral dignity, but as a kingdom free and independent of Germany. The Germans argued that Silesia was part of the empire, the Prussians considered it a separate and independent State. Frederick took advantage of these "state right" doctrines to sustain his claim, as Texas took advantage of her state right sovereignty when the central despotism of Santa Anna overthrew the federal constitution of 1824.

obtain the command of all the military positions of vantage along her north-eastern boundary.

The foresight of Frederick the Great disclosed to him the military value of Silesia in the event of a war with Austria, and it was probably that circumstance, quite as much as his alleged political rights, that induced him to enter it with an army on the day when he commenced negotiations. He began the war with Austria by surprising Saxony, and, during all his difficulties, clung tenaciously to the possession of Silesia. Saxony was important as a military barrier covering Prussia on the side of Austria, while Silesia indented deeply the line of the Austrian frontier and flanked a large part of Bohemia.* Thus Saxony and Silesia formed a natural fortification for Prussia, just as the deserts of the disputed land, when in our rear, covered the undefended confines of Texas at the same time that they gave us the keys to the enemy's country at Point Isabel and Matamoros.

It may be asserted that, when vacant or nearly vacant territory is in controversy between two nations, and forms the only subject of real dispute between them, it would be better for both to refrain from an attempt to occupy it, provided they are willing to arbitrate the quarrel, or settle it by diplomacy. But, when both parties assert claims, both have equal rights to enter it, when negotiation fails. The decision is then to be made only by intimidation or war. There is no alternative by which collision can be escaped, and it is the duty of the wiser of the disputants to place his national forces in such an advantageous position as either to defend his acknowledged territory or force himself to be driven from the soil he claims. "I do not consider the march to the Rio Grande to have been the cause of the

* Arnold's fourth lecture on Modern History.

war"—said a distinguished statesman, "any more than I consider the British march on Concord or Lexington to have been the cause of the American revolution, or the crossing of the Rubicon to have been the cause of the civil war in Rome. The march to the Rio Grande brought on the *collision of arms*, but, so far from being the cause of the war, it was itself the effect of those causes."

The power of declaring war is expressly reserved by the constitution to congress, and, though the president is commander in chief of the army when called into actual service, he should be extremely cautious in issuing orders or doing acts which may lead to hostilities resulting in war. Our congress was in session in January, 1846, when Mr. Slidell was rejected by Mexico, when our international relations were complicated as I have described, and when the secretary of war, by the president's direction, gave the order for Taylor's advance to the Rio Grande. This was an act that brought the armies of Mexico and the United States in front of each other; and although there can be no doubt that congress would have authorised the movement of our troops under the military advice of General Taylor,—provided the Rio Grande was to be made an ultimatum in the ratification of a treaty by our senate,—it is, nevertheless, to be profoundly regretted that the question was not previously submitted to our national representatives. At that moment the public mind was distracted between Mexico and England; but the Oregon question nearly absorbed the apparently minor difficulties with our restive neighbor. Congress contemplated the solemn probability of war with one of the mightiest nations of our age, and even some of our experienced statesmen,—as we have seen in the example of Mr. Adams,—recommended the most stringent measures of

armed occupation. At such a crisis, and with a confidential knowledge of all our foreign relations, it was the duty of the president to represent these matters frankly to congress and to ask the opinion of his constitutional advisers, as he subsequently did in the settlement of the dispute with Great Britain. This prudent act would have saved the executive from needless responsibility, whilst it indicated a sensitive devotion to the behests of our constitution. Congress met whilst our troops were encamped at Corpus Christi, as an army of observation, whose hostile, though protective character, was unquestionable; yet our representatives neither ordered its return nor refused it supplies. This denoted a willingness to sanction measures which might either pacify Mexico, or impose upon that republic the immediate alternative of war. It is not improbable that congress would have adopted such a course, because, according to the pretensions of Mexico, our troops had already invaded her domains. This is an important view of the question which should not be passed by silently. Mexico, it must be remembered, never relinquished her right to reconquer Texas, but always claimed the *whole* province as her own, asserting a determination to regard its union with our confederacy as justifiable cause of war. The joint-resolution, alone, was therefore a belligerent act of the congress of the United States, sufficient, according to the doctrine of Mexico, to compel hostile retaliation. But, moreover, as the entire soil of Texas, from the Sabine to the Nueces or Rio Grande was still claimed by Mexico as her unsurrendered country, the landing of a single American soldier anywhere south of our ancient boundary with Spain, was quite as hostile an invasion of Mexican territory as the passage of our army from Corpus Christi to Point Isabel.

Occasions upon which the eminent right of self protection has been adopted as a principle of action in the United States, are not wanting in our political history. The circumstances in all, are of course not precisely the same, but the policy is identical. The conduct of our government in regard to General Jackson's invasion of Florida for the suppression of Indian cruelties may be referred to. But congress might have found a still more analogous case, in the dispute between Spain and the United States as to the eastern limits of Louisiana. Spain alleged that Florida extended to the Mississippi, embracing what was then a wilderness, but, now, forms the populous States of Alabama and Mississippi; while our government asserted that all the territory eastward of the Mississippi and extending to the Rio Perdido belonged of right to us by virtue of the treaty concluded at Paris on the 30th of April, 1803. By acts of congress in 1803 and 1804 the president was authorized to take possession of the territory ceded by France, to establish a provisional government, to lay duties on goods imported into it; and, moreover, *whenever he deemed it expedient*, to erect the bay and river Mobile into a separate district, in which he might establish a port of entry and delivery.

In 1810, President Madison believing that the United States had too long acquiesced in the temporary continuance of this territory under Spanish domain, and that nothing was to be gained from Spain by candid discussion and amicable negotiation for several years, solved the difficulty by taking possession of Mobile and Baton Rouge and extending our jurisdiction to the Perdido. This possession, he took means to ensure, if needful, by military force. Mr. Madison's conduct was assailed in congress by the federalists who regarded it as an unjustifiable and offensive demonstration against

Spain, but it was defended with equal warmth by the opposition,—especially by Mr. Clay,—and the Rio Perdido has ever since continued to form the western limit of Florida.*

When nations are about to undertake the dread responsibility of war, and to spread the sorrow and ruin which always mark the pathway of victorious or defeated armies, they should pause to contemplate the enormity of their enterprise as well as the principles that can alone justify them in the sight of God and man. Human life cannot be lawfully destroyed, assailed or endangered for any other object than that of just defence of person or principle, yet it is not a legal consequence that defensive wars are always just.†

"It is the right of a State," said that profound moralist and statesman, Sir James Mackintosh, "to take all measures necessary for her safety if it be attacked or threatened from without: provided always that reparation cannot otherwise be obtained; that there is a reasonable prospect of obtaining it by arms; and that the evils of the contest are not probably greater than the mischiefs of acquiescence in the wrong; including, on both sides of the deliberation, the ordinary consequences of the example as well as the immediate effects of the act. If reparation can otherwise be obtained, a nation has no necessary, and therefore no just cause of war; if there be no probability of obtaining it by arms, a government cannot, with justice to their own nation, embark it in war; and, if the evils of resistance should appear on the whole greater than those of submission, wise

* Waite's State papers, 1809–11, p. 261; and Clay's speech on the line of the Perdido.

† Puffendorf, Lib. VIII, c. 6.—Note by Barbeyrac.

rulers will consider an abstinence from a pernicious exercise of right as a sacred duty to their own subjects, and a debt which every people owes to the great commonwealth of mankind, of which they and their enemies are alike members. A war is just against the wrongdoer when reparation for wrong cannot otherwise be obtained; but is then only conformable to all the principles of morality when it is not likely to expose the nation by whom it is levied to greater evils than it professes to avert, and when it does not inflict on the nation which has done the wrong, sufferings altogether disproportioned to the extent of the injury. When the rulers of a nation are required to determine a question of peace or war, the bare justice of their case against the wrongdoer never can be the sole, and is not always the chief matter on which they are morally bound to exercise a conscientious deliberation. Prudence in conducting the affairs of their subjects is in them a part of justice."

These are the true principles by which Mexico should have judged the controversy between us, before she rejected all our efforts to negotiate, and forced our government to prepare for hostilities

The idea of war, for mere conquest, seems now to be obsolete among civilized nations. To political dominion, as exhibited in the various governments of the old world, and in most of the new, geographical limits are definitely assigned. This fact must, hereafter, greatly modify the objects of war, by narrowing them to *principles* instead of *territory*. Principles, however, are always the fair subjects of controversy for the diplomatic art. Yet such is the perversity of human nature, that, although we are convinced of the propriety and possibility of adjusting our disputes by reason,

we nevertheless go to war for these very principles, and, after having done each other an incalculable amount of injury, at last sit down like cripples, to negotiate the very matters which ought to have been treated and terminated diplomatically at first. It is, perhaps, the folly of mankind to believe that there is more wisdom in negotiators and diplomacy when nations are lame and weakened by war than when they are full of the vigorous energy and intelligence of peace!

NOTE.—It may be useful to record the following proclamation of General Woll, before annexation, in order to show, that the agreements between Santa Anna and the Texans in 1836, are not the only Mexican documents in existence which seemed to open the boundary question between Texas and Tamaulipas.

"*Headquarters of the Army of the North, Mier, June* 20, 1844.

"I, Adrian Woll, general of brigade, &c., make known:

"1. The armistice agreed on with the department of Texas having expired, and the war being, in consequence, recommenced against the inhabitants of that department, all communication with it ceases.

"2. Every individual, of whatever condition, who may contravene provisions of the preceding article, shall be regarded as a traitor, and shall receive the punishment prescribed in article 45, title 10, treatise 8, of the articles of war.

"3. *Every individual who may be found at the distance of one league from the left bank of the Rio Bravo, will be regarded as a favorer and accomplice of the usurpers of that part of the national territory, and as a traitor to his country; and, after a summary military trial, shall receive the said punishment.*

"4. Every individual who may be comprehended within the provisions of the preceding article, and may be rash enough to fly at the sight of any force belonging to the supreme government, shall be pursued until taken, or put to death.

"5. In consideration of the situation of the towns of La Reda and Santa Rita de Ampudia, as well as of all the *farm houses beyond the Rio Bravo*, I have this day received, from the supreme government, orders to determine the manner by which those interested are to be protected; but, until the determination of the supreme government be received, I warn all those who are beyond the limits here prescribed, to bring them within the line, or to abandon them; as those who disobey this order, will infallibly suffer the punishment here established. ADRIAN WOLL.

CHAPTER III.

Army marches from Corpus Christi—Taylor prepares the Mexicans for his advance—Description of the march—Beautiful prairie and desolate sand-wilderness—Rattlesnakes—Chapparal—The Arroyo Colorado—First hostile demonstrations of the Mexicans—Expected fight—Cross the Colorado—Worth and Taylor separate—True nature of discipline—Characters of Mexican and American soldiers contrasted.

On the 8th of March, 1846, the joyous news ran through the American camp, at Corpus Christi, that the tents were at last to be struck. The worn out soldiery had nothing to regret in quitting a spot where their eyes were only relieved by looking from the dreary sea in front to the desolate prairie in the rear. General Taylor had already taken means to prepare the Mexicans for his advance, although he scarcely expected resistance. Respectable citizens from Matamoros had frequently visited his camp; and to all of those who were represented as possessing influence at home he proclaimed the unhostile feelings of our government towards their country, and that when our army marched southward it would not pass the Rio Grande unless Mexico provoked war. He invariably apprized these strangers of his resolution to protect the peaceful inhabitants in all their rights and usages, as well as to pay for every thing needed by his forces instead of plundering the country for support.

Accordingly, on the morning of the 8th of the month, the advanced guard, composed of the cavalry and Major Ring-

gold's light artillery,—the whole under the command of Colonel Twiggs, and numbering twenty-three officers and three hundred and eighty-seven men,—took up its line of march towards Matamoras. This corps was succeeded by the brigades of infantry, the last of which departed on the 11th followed immediately by the commander in chief with his staff. The weather was favorable; the roads in tolerable order; the troops in good condition notwithstanding the winter's hardships; while a general spirit of animation pervaded the whole body, inspired as it was with the hope of adventure in the neighborhood of an enemy. All, therefore, departed on this day from Corpus Christi by land, except the command of Major Monroe, who was to reach the Brazos de Santiago in transports under convoy of the United States brig Porpoise and the Woodbury. This officer was to embark with a seige train and field battery, in season to reach his destination when the army would be in the vicinity of Point Isabel.

The last adieus of our forces to their dreary winter quarter were by no means tearful, as with colors flying and music playing, they crossed the sandy hills that concealed it forever from their sight. The first day's march passed through alternate patches of prairies and timber to the Nueces; but, on the two next, these sad wastes were exchanged for splendid fields blossoming with flowers of every hue. A delicious fragrance filled the air, and the whole surface of the earth as far as the eye could reach, seemed covered with a beautiful carpet. The edge of the horizon, in every direction, was crowded with wild animals. On one side thousands of mustangs curvetted over the gentle elevations of the rolling prairie; on another herds of deer might be seen standing for a moment filled with wonder at the unwonted sight of human beings, and then bounding off

until they were lost in the vast distance. Beautiful antelopes, nimble as the wind, were beheld in countless numbers, while pecarys and wild bulls rushed in droves across the path of our men. But, on the fourth day of the march, this scene of enchantment suddenly vanished. Uncultivated prairies and immense herds of savage beasts had already testified the abandoned state of the country; yet the region our forces now entered disclosed the frightful "nakedness of the land." The water became exceedingly bad, and there was scarcely fuel enough for culinary purposes. The blooming vegetation of the preceding days was exchanged for sands through which the weary men and cattle toiled with extreme difficulty. Salt lagunes spread out on every side. At each step the fatigued soldier plunged ankle-deep in the yielding soil, while a scorching sun shone over him and not a breath of air relieved his sufferings. At times, a verdant forest loomed up along the heated horizon, fringed by limpid lakes, and our wearied columns moved on gaily, cheated, again and again, by the hope of shade and water. Suddenly the beautiful groves dwindled into jagged clumps of thorns or aloes, and the fairy lakes changed to salt and turbid lagunes. "The wormwood star had fallen on every thing and turned the waters to bitterness." The plant whose piercing spines and sword-like leaves have entitled it to the name of the "Spanish bayonet," was the hermit shrub of this dreadful Zaharah. Around its roots the snakes lurked and crawled. Whenever the soldiers' path was unimpeded by these annoyances, scarifying his limbs as he advanced, the ground seemed heated and sinking like the *scoriæ* of Vesuvius. Man and beast sank exhausted and panting on the earth. The want and value of delicious water are never known till we pass a day like this under the burning rays of a tropical sun, toiling on foot over a scorched

and arid soil without refreshment! At length the word ran along the line that it was approaching a lake whose waters were not salt. "Under the excitement of hope the faint and exhausted infantry pressed onward with renewed life, while, some miles ahead, the artillery were seen to halt enjoying the luxury of *water*. As the soldiers reached it all discipline was forgotten; their arms were thrown down, and they rushed boldly in, thrusting their heads beneath the waves in their desire to quench the thirst that was consuming their vitals."*

Such is the natural aspect and character of the desolate region between the Nueces and the Rio Grande,—a chequered wilderness of sand and verdure,—fit only for the wild beasts that inhabit it, and properly described in former days, as a a suitable frontier between the great republics of North America.

On the 21st of March, all our forces concentrated on the Arroyo Colorado,—a salt stream or lagune nearly one hundred yards broad, and so deep as to be scarcely fordable,—situated about thirty miles north of Matamoros. Had the enemy attacked us here his assault would have been formidable, wearied as were our troops with the distressing marches of previous days. Bold, bluff banks, twenty or thirty feet high, hem in the stream, whose borders, on both sides, are lined, for a considerable breadth, with impervious thickets of *chapparal*. These thorny groves are to be found in all sections of the south, varying in size from a few yards to a mile in thickness, so closely interlaced and matted with briers and bushes as to prevent the passage of animals larger than a hare. They are the sorest annoyances of travellers in Mexico, and often force the wayfarer to make a long cir-

* Army on the Rio Grande, p. 13.

cuit to pass their limits, though they reward him for his trouble by supplying an abundance of the *tuna*—a luscious fruit of the prickly pear,—which grows luxuriantly on these natural and impenetrable walls.

Such, with the barrier of the stream, was the fortification nature had interposed for the safe guard of Mexico at the Arroyo Colorado. But the inert natives seemed indisposed to take advantage of those rare defences, though not without some hostile demonstration which the resolute conduct of Taylor soon overcame.

When our advanced corps encamped near the banks of the stream on the 19th, an armed *reconnoisance* was sent forward to examine the country. On reaching the river, our scouts discovered that the opposite side was lined with a body of *ranchero* cavalry, from whom they learned, although no opposition was made to our examination of the ford, that we should be treated as enemies if we attempted to pass it. Impossible as it was to ascertain accurately the amount of the opposing force, our men were prepared for the worst, and, at an early hour of the 20th, the cavalry and first brigade of infantry were thrown in position, at the ford, while the batteries of field artillery were formed so as to sweep the opposite bank. All was now anxiety and eagerness among our gallant men. Far along the borders of the river, above and below, the bugles of the enemy were heard ringing out in the clear morning air. But the hope of frightening our men by overwhelming numbers was of no avail. Our pioneers worked steadily on the road they were cutting to the brink of the river; and, when all was ready for the passage, the adjutant general of the Mexican forces appeared on the ground for a final effort of intimidation. With Spanish courtesy, he informed our general that positive orders were given to his men to fire upon our forces if they at-

tempted to cross, and that our passage of the river would be considered a declaration of war. At the same time he placed in Taylor's hands a warlike proclamation issued by Mejia at Matamoros on the 18th, containing unequivocal manifestations of the intention of the Mexicans to molest us.

Our commander-in-chief, however, was not to be deterred by these threats from the fulfilment of the orders he had received to pass the Rio Grande. He answered the officer that he would "*immediately* cross the river, and that if his hostile party showed itself on the other bank after our passage was commenced, it would unquestionably receive the fire of our artillery." In the meantime the second brigade, which had encamped some miles in our rear, came up and formed on the extreme right; and, as the road to the river bank was by this time completed, the order to advance was given.

It was a moment of intense excitement. What forces might not lurk behind the dense walls of *chapparal*, ready to dash upon our ranks as they deployed on the other side? Our artillerists stood to their aimed and loaded guns. The Mexicans were doubtless eager and panting for resistance in the rear of the bristling plants that lined the lofty parapet of the river's bank. Every eye was strained upon the first daring rank that was to plunge into the stream as a "forlorn hope." Mexico would fight now if ever; for her mettle was as yet untried! For an instant, profound silence reigned along the anxious line which the next moment might be involved in the fire of battle. Suddenly the gallant Worth spurred to the head of our troops, and dashing boldly into the flood, waved them on to the further shore. But not a shot was fired by the recreant foe, and as our men rose shouting from the water and rushed up the steeps of the opposite bank they beheld the valiant Mexicans in brisk retreat

towards Matamoros! The fugitives were unmolested;—a laugh of scorn and pity ran through our ranks;—and, before nightfall, the first and second brigades of infantry, with a train of two hundred wagons had crossed the stream and encamped three miles from its banks.

This was an important affair, as it was the first in which the Mexicans showed themselves in a decidedly hostile attitude; and it furnished an excellent opportunity to try the mettle of our men both in spirit and discipline. Not a soldier faltered.

On the morning of the 23d of March, General Taylor departed with his whole army from the camp near the Colorado. After a march of fifteen miles he reached, on the 24th, a position on the route from Matamoros to Point Isabel,—distant about eighteen miles from the former and ten from the latter,—where he left the infantry brigades under the command of General Worth, with instructions to press on in the direction of Matamoros until a suitable position for encampment was obtained, at which he might halt, holding the route in observation, whilst the commander-in-chief proceeded with the cavalry to Point Isabel. At that post General Taylor expected to meet the transports from Corpus Christi with the force under Major Monroe, and to make the necessary arrangements for the establishment and defence of a depot.

As soon as the army left the Colorado a new object, of more interest in natural history than military memoirs, presented itself to the notice of our troops. The soil was covered with a long wiry grass among which glided immense numbers of huge rattlesnakes, more appalling to our soldiers than the Mexicans. The country literally swarmed with serpents. From the Colorado to within a few miles of Point

Isabel their warning rattle was heard on all sides. They crept between the ranks as our men marched through the long herbage, and at night coiled themselves comfortably under their blankets for warmth.

Familiar as we are with the campaigns of Frederick and Napoleon, and willing to record as classical the great deeds of the old world's heroes, we are still often loath to do justice to the brave men in our own country who have served the State so zealously in Florida and Mexico. It is not simple bravery in battle that commends a soldier to admiration, for few are cowards when the excitement of action hurries them headlong among their foes amid the shouts and thunder of actual carnage. But it is the preparatory discipline that tests a military character. The camp and the march are the soldier's training. The dreary winter-quarter passed in patient service, and the wearying advance over burning plains or snowy mountains, are the real touchstones of courage, and prove those powers of *endurance and subordination* which make resistance staunch and stubborn. These are the sources of discipline; and it was with troops that had borne the winter hardships at Corpus Christi, I have described, and made the short but arduous march to Point Isabel, that Taylor felt sure of victory. They had encountered extraordinary fatigue, and yet were ready at a moment's notice for battle without flinching. With such schooling an army becomes a gigantic instrument moving with the accuracy of clock-work, put in motion by the general's genius. It can endure as well as perform all he requires, and he knows that the result of a battle depends alone on his numbers, his position, or his individual skill in military combination. The common soldier and the officer

thus react upon each other, and the electric chain of mutual *confidence* makes success an impulse.

The American and the Mexican soldier are essentially different, though both, according to the report of distinguished officers, are almost equally brave. In the anglo-saxon race bravery is the balance between prudence and courage, exercised with an indomitable resolution to achieve a desired end. The American soldier is fearless, yet he values life and seeks to protect it. His object is to subdue or slay his foe, still he determines to avoid, if possible, a fatal catastrophe. This renders him intrepid while it teaches the importance of discipline and obedience to resolute and skilful officers. He perceives at once the object to be secured or the thing to be done, and he marches on with the mingled caution and spirit requisite for success.

It may be said that a certain degree of timidity is necessary in every balanced character in order to ensure reflection, for natural courage, unaided by sensitiveness, would render it rash. But the Mexican soldier seems to be guided by a different system, and to be brave without either prudence or enduring discipline. He is trained in manœuvres; and, believing that when he masters his manual he is equal to all military emergencies, he supposes that a battle is little more than a parade. As Mexican troops are rather political engines, designed for the domestic police of cities, than for actual service in the field, the soldier is more of a plaything than a tool or weapon. Vague, ideal notions of Roman patriotism, are infused into his mind by the demagogues of the army in bombastic proclamations, and he imagines it better to perish than surrender to his foe. But this murderous doctrine of "revenge or death" serves rather to animate him *before* battle than to carry him steadily through its perils. He has the ability to perceive the beauty of abstract virtue,

but lacks the sustained energy, the profound endurance, to realize it. He rushes onward without deliberation, or regard of consequences. An international war is, in his estimation, a personal not a political quarrel. A brutal ferocity marks every headlong movement, and deprives him of the control of reason. Besides this, *life*, has not the same value to a Mexican as to an American warrior, for the objects and hopes of their lives are incapable of comparison. One lives for practical liberty and progress, the other's existence is a mere strife for bread under military despotism. A Mahomedan fatalism—derived, perhaps, from his Moorish kindred—tinges the nature of a Mexican, and the impulsive blood of a tropical climate subjects him almost exclusively to his instincts. Hence Spanish wars have been long and sanguinary butcheries, while their civil dissensions are the feted ferment of corruption.

The Mexican, hot and fretful in controversy, is ever quick and sometimes secret, in ridding himself of his foe;—the American is equally prompt with his pistol, but gives his insulting enemy an equal chance. A sudden conflict with knives ends a Spanish rencontre or dispute; while periods of deliberation and cool arrangements precede the fatal field between our countrymen. The American officer is scientifically educated in military schools and *leads* his men to battle. The Mexican is ignorant of all but ordinary drills, and either *follows* his impulsive squadrons, or, flies at the approach of personal danger. The one has nerve and endurance, the other impulse and passion; hence, while the Mexican strikes his blow and retreats to his lair if foiled, the American, equally unchanged by victory or defeat, moves onward with indomitable purpose until his object is successfully accomplished. The one dwindles too often into

the cruel assassin or relentless persecutor,—the other, as frequently, attains the dignity of a clement hero.

These general observations apply, of course, only to the masses, for truly brave and patriotic men exist in all countries, and nowhere are the examples of heroic qualities more conspicuous than among the Spanish races. The fault lies more in temperament than in soul. An equipoise between intellect and passion is alone deficient in the nature of the Mexican people, for the savage has not been entirely extirpated from the mingled blood of Indian and Spaniard.

When the remarkable energy of men, born in genial climates, is tempered by self restraint, it produces that urbane and chivalrous character which once made war the school of gentlemen. But the modern ideas of liberty and patriotism have deprived standing armies of all exclusive claim to national protection; and, as long as each citizen feels that the defence of his native land or of his country's rights depends upon himself, the volunteer as well as the regular will be prompt to discharge his military duty with skill, alacrity and irresistible resolution.

CHAPTER IV.

Character of Mexican diplomacy—Genius of the Spanish language—Paredes's proclamation—Hostilities authorized by him—Taylor goes to Isabel—Description of the Brasos St. Jago and Point Isabel—burning of the custom-house—Made a depot and fortified—Taylor and Worth unite and plant the American flag opposite Metamoros—Worth's interview with La Vega and Césares—Fruitless efforts of our generals to establish amity—Description of the country round Matamoros—appearance of the town.

The qualities which characterize the Mexican soldier, as described in the last chapter, mark also the statesman of that country. Their loud and vain-glorious professions of resolve; their bombastic proclamations; their short, passionate and revolutionary governments; their personal rivalries and universal anarchy, denote impulsive tempers utterly incapable of sustained self-rule or resistance. To those who are familiar with Mexican history, this is not a novel fact, yet it has been astonishingly manifested in the war between our countries. It would be a tedious task to recount the various manifestos and despatches that were written to control and satisfy public sentiment in regard to the pending difficulties. Diplomacy is the weapon of weak powers, and the pen is a most important implement when defeat, inaction or incompetency are to be excused to the Mexicans. There is something perhaps in the genius of the Spanish language that renders it peculiarly appropriate to appease the vanity of those who speak it. The natural vehicle of eloquence, its magic words, its magnificent phrases and its

sonorous sentences march along in solemn and pompous procession, and compel the attention of every listener. Simple sentiments, clothed in the expressions of this beautiful tongue assume new and striking shapes, and the judgment is charmed or swayed by sympathy with the ear.

The statesmen of Mexico are aware of these extraordinary advantages, and whether they have to account for a lost battle, tranquillize a passionate mob, or satisfy an importunate *diplomat*, they are equally ready to resort to the armory of their resounding language for defence.

We have already seen that Paredes overthrew Herrera's administration by means of the Texan question and opposition to negotiation with our government. When General Taylor advanced towards the Rio Grande this chieftain was still president and quite as unable to fulfil the promises to repel us as his predecessors had been in 1844 and 1845. Feeling, under the peculiar views of the controversy they entertained, that the honor of their country required our expulsion from Texas, they had announced and pledged this auspicious result to the people. But at the moment when all these extraordinary boasts were made, they were, doubtless, designed only to serve a temporary purpose, under the hope that some fortuitous circumstance might occur which would exhonerate them from war. I have heretofore stated that the Mexicans were encouraged in resistance by the belief of impending difficulties with England. In addition to this, Paredes probably relied on foreign interference in consequence of his monarchical schemes; nor was it until the spring and summer of 1846, that all these prospects were blighted by the energetic course of our senate and the discretion of the British cabinet in regard to Oregon. But it was then too late to retreat, for hostilities had already commenced.

Loud as were the Mexicans in their fulminations against our alleged usurpation, I am inclined to believe they never seriously contemplated the invasion of Texas, but hoped either to let the question sleep for many years in the portfolios of negotiators whilst a rigorous non-intercourse was preserved, or to solicit, finally, the mediatorial influence of Great Britain and France in order to prevent war if our congress intimated a disposition to declare it. This opinion is founded upon the remarkable proclamation issued in Mexico on the 21st of March, 1846, by General Paredes.* His language is still decided in regard to Mexican rights over Texas; but he asserts that "*the authority to declare war against the United States is not vested in him*," and that the congress of the nation, which is about to assemble, must consider what is necessary in the approaching conflict. This proclamation was issued in the capital after it was known that our army was advancing to the Rio Grande, and on the very day when Mr. Slidell's passports were sent him at Jalapa by the Mexican government. But between the 21st of March and the 23d of April the provisional president's opinion of his rights underwent a change, for, on that day, he published another proclamation in which he asserts that he had "sent orders to the general in chief of the division of the northern frontier to *act in hostility* against the army which is in hostility against us; to oppose war to the enemy which wars upon us;" though, in conclusion, he announces that still he "does *not declare war* against the government of the United States of America."† Thus, under the masked name of *hostilities*, *the Mexican government authorised the first war-like blows to be struck*, because, as it alleged, we had invaded the national domain by marching

* See Mexico as it was, &c., 4th ed. p. 407.

† Diario oficial—April 24.

to Matamoros. It was the forced realization of all those gasconading manifestos, which for the last two years had breathed war and defiance against the United States. Such, then, was the actual origin of the collision, for the troops and officers of General Taylor religiously abstained from acts of military violence, and confined themselves exclusively to the defence of the territory they were directed to hold. That mere *protection* was the undoubted purpose of our government, will not be questioned by the reader when he recollects the smallness of our army, and its entire want of preparation to molest or invade a nation of more than seven millions of inhabitants.

In the last chapter, General Taylor was left on his way to Point Isabel, while Worth moved in the direction of Matamoros.* During the march of our column towards the sea shore it was approached, on its right flank, by a party of Mexicans bearing a white flag, which proved to be a civil deputation from Matamoros desiring an interview with the commander-in-chief. General Taylor apprised the representatives of Tamaulipas that he would halt at the first suitable place on the road to afford them a reception; but it was

* I desire it may be remembered that the important facts related by me in regard to our military and diplomatic movements are all given upon the authority of official papers published by congress. The reader who wishes to verify them will do well to provide himself with the volumes of executive documents, for I shall not deem it necessary to incumber the margins of my pages with continual references. I have been scrupulously accurate in all my quotations from American authorities, and have observed the same course in regard to the Mexican reports, proclamations and manifestos. See especially, (for this volume,) Senate doc. No. 337, 29th cong. 1st sess.—H. of R. doc. No. 197, id.—Senate doc. No. 378, id.—Senate doc. No 388, id.—H. of R. doc. No. 4, 29th cong. 2d sess.—H. of R. doc. No. 19, id.—H. of R. doc. No. 42, id.—Senate doc. No. 107, id.—H. of R doc. No. 119, id.

found necessary to pass on to Point Isabel without delay in consequence of the want of water elsewhere on the route. The deputation, however, declined accompanying our forces towards their destination, and halting a few miles from the Point, sent a formal protest of the prefect of the northern district of Tamaulipas against our occupation of the disputed country. At this moment it was discovered that the buildings of Point Isabel were in flames. The retreating Mexicans had set fire to the edifices to prevent our occupation; and, as General Taylor considered this a direct and vexatious evidence of hostility, and was unwilling to be trifled with by the tools of the military authorities of Matamoros, he dismissed the deputation with the information that he would answer the protest when he was opposite the city.

The cavalry was forthwith pushed on to the burning town in time to arrest the fire which consumed but three or four houses; yet the inhabitants had already fled, and the officer, who committed the incendiary act under the orders, it is said, of General Mejia, was nowhere to be found.

As our troops entered the village they were gratified to find that the transports from Corpus Christi had exactly answered their land movement, and that the steamers had arrived in the harbor with the convoy close in their rear, only a few hours before our forces entered from the desert. General Taylor immediately directed the engineers to examine the ground with a view of tracing lines of defence and strengthening a position, which he decided should form the great depot of our forces.

Point Isabel is approached from the sea through the Brazos de Santiago. It is a wild and desolate sea coast, defended by bars and strewn with wrecks. In former years,

a small Mexican village and fort, containing a couple of cannons, stood upon the Brazos Point, but during one of those terrific storms which ravage the Mexican coast, the sea rose above the frail barrier of shifting sand, and when the tempest subsided, it was discovered that the village and fortification had been engulphed beneath the waves. Few places are more inhospitable on the American coast than the bar of Brazos. There is no friendly shore under whose protecting lee ships may seek safety during the awful hurricanes that so often descend upon them without a moments warning. But when a vessel has fairly passed the entrance, she moves along securely over the waters of the bay, and anchors under cover of the sand hills to the left whilst her passengers and freight are landed in boats or lighters.

On a bluff promontory jutting out into the bay and sloping gradually inland, stands the village of Isabel. Its houses denoted the character of its people. The spars of wrecked vessels, a few reeds, and the *debris* of a stormy shore, thatched with grass and sea weed, formed the materials of which they were built, while a vagabond race, fifty or sixty in number, constituted the official but smuggling population, which was prepared to protect the revenue of Mexico or receive bribes from contrabandists, as their interests might dictate. A certain Señor Rodriguez was the captain of this important port at the period of our occupation; and, being a person equally ready to take pay from importers or exporters of goods as well as to receive further compensation for concealing his roguery from the government, he deemed it his duty, as a faithful officer, to destroy the custom house by the conflagration that incensed General Taylor against the prefect of Tamaulipas.* Such was

* Our army on the Rio Grande, chap. v.

Point Isabel and its vagrant inhabitants, when abandoned to our forces, and adopted as a depot.

While the engineers were engaged in fortifying a position, which was soon to become of so much importance in the war, General Taylor rejoined the division under Worth's command, and on the morning of the 28th of March, the order was given for all the columns to advance towards Matamoros. At half past six the movement began. The arms were closely inspected, and every man was directed to be on the alert in case of sudden attack. Yet no symptom of fear was exhibited in our ranks, while the squadrons pressed on gaily, with merry songs and pleasant chat. About a mile from the Rio Grande they saw the first house on their route of more than one hundred and fifty miles from Corpus Christi. The dark eyed Mexicans were lounging with apparent indifference about their doors, and returned civil answers to our inquiries. Soon after, the city of Matamoros came in sight; and, with bands playing, and regimental colors flying to the wind, we arrived opposite the town at noon. From the head quarters of General Mejia, the Mexican standard was displayed, and, in a short time a temporary flagstaff, prepared by the eighth regiment, under the superintendence of Lieut. Col. Belknap, was raised aloft bearing the American ensign; but no other manifestation of joy was given than by the national airs which were pealed forth from our regimental bands. The moment our flag was displayed, it was saluted, from Matamoros, by the *consulate* flags of France and England; while the absence of our own banner from the opposite shore denoted the departure or restraint of the commercial representative of our Union.*

As soon as our colors were raised on the eastern bank

* Army on the Rio Grande, chap. ii.

of the Rio Grande, General Worth and his staff descended to the water's edge, bearing a white flag and a communication from the commander-in-chief, announcing formally the purpose of our advance to the dividing stream. General Taylor believed that this would be the means either of establishing friendly relations between the posts, or of eliciting the final decision of the Mexican government. As soon as Worth and his companions were perceived from the opposite bank two cavalry officers crossed with an interpreter. After some delay in parleying, it was announced that General La Vega would receive our messenger on the right bank of the river, to which he immediately passed, accompanied by his aid-de-camp Lieutenant Smith, and Lieutenants Magruder, Deas, and Blake, attached to his staff, and Lieutenant Knowlton as interpreter.

On arriving at the Mexican quarters, General Worth was courteously received by La Vega and introduced to Don Juan Garza, *oficial de defensores*, and to the *Licenciado* Césares, who represented the authorities of Matamoros. La Vega informed General Worth that he had been directed to receive such communications as might be presented, and accompanied his tender with the remark that the march of the United States troops through a portion of Tamaulipas was considered by his country as an act of war.

This was no time to discuss the international question, and Worth, properly refraining from conversation upon so vexatious a topic, proceeded, as an act of courtesy, to read the open document he bore, which he afterwards withdrew inasmuch as it had not been received personally by General Mejia the commander-in-chief at Matamoros.

A demand to see our consul was refused by the Mexicans, and although we learned that he was not under restraint but still continued in the exercise of his official duties, all com-

munication with that functionary was peremptorily denied. Thus terminated, unsatisfactorily, another effort on our part to employ diplomacy in the establishment of harmonious feelings with the local authorities of Matamoros; and notwithstanding General Worth was assured that "Mexico had not declared war against the Union," and that "the countries were still at peace," he returned to the American camp with gloomy forebodings for the future.*

If there was little to hope from the people of Mexico, or little attractive in the prospect of social intercourse between the camp and town, there was much to gratify the eye of our fatigued soldiers in the scenery that lay before them. On their long and toilsome march they had been relieved from the dreary wastes of Texas as soon as they beheld the blue haze hanging over the distant windings of the Rio Grande. The city of Matamoros, as seen from the opposite side of the river, skirts the stream for more than a mile with its neat and comfortable dwellings. As the trade of this town is chiefly carried on with the interior, there has been no need of encroaching with wharves and walls on the margin of the river. Hence the city is somewhat removed from the banks, and embowered amid extensive groves and gardens, from the midst of whose luxuriant foliage its towers and dwellings rise in broken but graceful lines. There is but little timber near the river, which traverses beautiful prairies as it approaches the sea. The hand of culture has taken these waving meadows under its protection; and, on all sides the landscape is dotted with abundant vegetation. The grass covered banks are screened by shrubbery or grazed by cattle; while the stream, winding

* See Senate doc. 337, 29th cong. 1st sess. for a memorandum of General Worth's spirited interview with La Vega and Césares.

along in easy curves, is so narrow near the city that conversation may be easily carried on from its opposite sides. "The rich verdure of the shores,—the cultivated gardens scattered around,—the clustering fig and pomegranite trees," contrasted with the desert through which our troops had passed, converted this land into a scene of enchantment. The fatigued soldiers were repaid for all their toils. Existence, alone, in so beautiful a climate and with such delicious prospects, was sufficient recompense for our men, and they gazed with delight at the hostile shore as martial *don* and gay *donzella* poured out in crowds from the walls of Matamoros to behold the foreign flag and the bold intruders clustered beneath its folds.

CHAPTER V.

Military and civil proclamations against the United States at Matamoros in April, 1846—General Taylor's pacific policy—Desertion from our army promoted by Ampudia and Arista—Shooting of deserters, seen swimming the river, ordered—Construction of the fort opposite Matamoros—Guerillas on the left bank—Ampudia and Arista arrive—Death of Colonel Cross—Expedition of Lieutenants Dobbins and Porter—Death of Porter—Surprise and surrender of Captain Thornton's party of dragoons—Ampudia and General Taylor on the blockade of the mouth of the river—Fort capable of defence; left under the command of Major Brown—Walker's men surprised on the prairie—Taylor goes to Point Isabel—Cannonade heard from Matamoros—May with his dragoons and Walker sent to the fort for tidings—Their adventures—Return to Point Isabel—Taylor calls on Texas and Louisiana for reinforcements—character and quality of the Texan Ranger.

The months of March and April, 1846, were fruitful in civil and military proclamations at Matamoros, manifesting a hostile spirit against our country, but General Taylor persisted in his pacific conduct and directed all under his command to observe a scrupulous regard to the municipal rights and religious usages of the quiet Mexicans whom they found in the neighborhood of the Rio Grande. In order that no pretext of ignorance might be pleaded by our adversaries, in this respect, his orders were published in Spanish as well as English, and freely distributed among the people. It is to be regretted that a similar forbearance was not exhibited by our opponents. As soon as our forces appeared in the vicinity of Matamoros they began to intrigue with our subalterns. It was known that our army, made up at random from a population of natives and emigrants, contained individuals born in Europe; and, to the religious and political

prejudices of this class, the authorities addressed themselves.*

In consequence of these seditious appeals, the evil of desertion increased to an alarming extent, and the most effectual measures were necessary to prevent the contagion from spreading. As our deserters, by merely swimming the narrow river, were at once within the enemy's lines, pursuit and apprehension, with a view to trial, were out of the question. General Taylor, therefore, deemed it his duty, warranted by the hostile attitude of the Mexicans, to order that all men seen swimming across the river should be hailed by our pickets and ordered to return, and, in case they did

* The following document was circulated by Mexican emissaries and spies among our troops:

"*The commander-in-chief of the Mexican army to the English and Irish under the orders of the American General Taylor:*

"KNOW YE: That the government of the United States is committing repeated acts of barbarous aggression against the magnanimous Mexican nation; that the government which exists under "the flag of the stars" is unworthy of the designation of Christian. Recollect that you were born in Great Britain; that the American government looks with coldness upon the powerful flag of St. George, and is provoking to a rupture the warlike people to whom it belongs, President Polk boldly manifesting a desire to take possession of Oregon, as he has already done of Texas. Now, then, come with all confidence to the Mexican ranks, and I guarantee to you, upon my honor, good treatment, and that all your expenses shall be defrayed until your arrival in the beautiful capital of Mexico.

"Germans, French, Poles, and individuals of other nations! Separate yourselves from the Yankees, and do not contribute to defend a robbery and usurpation which, be assured, the civilized nations of Europe look upon with the utmost indignation. Come, therefore, and array yourselves under the tri-colored flag, in the confidence that the God of armies protects it, and that it will protect you equally with the English.

PEDRO DE AMPUDIA.

FRANCISCO R. MORENO, Adj. of the commander-in-chief.

Head Quarters, upon the Road to Matamoros, April, 2, 1846."

Another and similar appeal was made by Arista on the 20th of April.

not obey this summons, they should be shot. These stringent orders were verbally given to the several commanders, about the beginning of April, and checked the practice, though it is believed that only two men,—privates of fifth and seventh infantry, from France and Switzerland,—fell victims to the fatal command. Thus failed so dastardly an attempt to interfere by intrigue with the *morale* of our army. Taylor was undoubtedly justified in resorting to the most efficient means to prevent the decimation of his scant forces; and although some sensitive politicians in our Union were scandalized by the severity of his orders, yet, when they learned that the men who were induced to desert had been used in subsequent actions against us by the Mexicans, their philanthropic clamor was drowned in the universal voice of approval.

The manifestly warlike appearance of the Mexicans, and the attempts they were making to fortify the right bank of the river, induced General Taylor to strengthen the position of his camp on the opposite side.

Accordingly on the 6th of April a battery for four eighteen pounders, bearing directly on the public square and in good range for demolishing the town, had already been completed and the guns mounted, whilst the engineers were busy in laying out a strong bastioned field fort for a garrison of five hundred men in the rear of the battery. But the Mexicans did not leave us long in doubt as to their ultimate designs. Their chief embarrassment seemed to consist in a want of troops and efficient commanders, yet this was remedied by the arrival of considerable reinforcements in the course of the month. Meantime, however, the chapparals and lonely prairies of the left bank of the Rio Grande, swarmed with ranchero cavalry, not authorized perhaps by

the powers in Matamoros to attack us directly, but whose predatory habits and Arab warfare were encouraged against small bodies of our men until the main army should be enabled to strike a decisive blow.

On the 10th of April, Colonel Cross, a deputy quartermaster-general mounted his horse and proceeded to ride, as usual, for exercise, but the night passed without his return, nor was his fate known until ten days after, when a skeleton, found on the plains, was identified as that of the unfortunate officer. The mode of his death or the names of his slayers have never been discovered. But it was generally reported and believed that he had been captured by the lawless band of Romano Falcon, a ranchero bandit, and, after being robbed of every thing valuable, was shot with a pistol by the robber captain.

With a view to check the depredations of these guerillas, Lieutenants Dobbins of the third infantry, and Porter of the fourth,—two bold and hardy soldiers,—were authorised to scour the country with a body of picked men, and capture or destroy any such parties they might encounter. It appears that they separated in quest of the enemy, and that Lieutenant Porter at the head of his own detachment surprised an armed troop, numbering nearly one hundred and fifty, engaged in jerking beef. Upon the approach of our officer one of the Mexicans snapped a musket at him, a salutation which Lieutenant Porter returned by the discharge of his double barreled gun. Upon this the Mexicans fled to the screen of the chapparal. Porter took possession of the horses and blankets of the fugitives, and, mounting his men, started for head quarters. At this moment, however, the rain began to pour down with the violence that is only witnessed in tropical climates, and whilst the Lieutenant and his party were passing through a dense copse of chapparal

they were fired on by the enemy from an ambush. Shot followed shot from the secret foe in rapid succession, but our unfortunate men were unable to sustain the contest, as their powder had been soaked by the sudden shower. They wisely retreated, therefore, to the chapparal, and, separating into three parties, found their way to camp; but the luckless Porter, having been wounded in the thigh, was seized by the Mexicans as soon as his men departed, and despatched with their knives whilst they shrieked and yelled over his mangled body like a band of infuriate demons.

Acts like these, characteristic of the worst periods of border raids, denoted the approaching storm. The country east of the Rio Grande bristled with irregular troopers. It was unsafe to go beyond the hail of sentinels, and the peaceful aspect of nature which had charmed our men so greatly upon their arrival was changed for the stern alarums of war. By the joyous peals of the church bells, the shouts of acclamation, and the report of spies, we learned that General Ampudia had arrived in Matamoros, and that, some days later, he was followed by Arista, who immediately assumed the chief command and apprised General Taylor, in courteous terms, that he considered hostilities commenced and was resolved to prosecute them.

Among all these notes of war-like preparation, none perhaps were more significant than the adventure which must be now recorded. On the 24th of April a squadron of dragoons, sixty-three in number, under the orders of Captains Thornton and Hardee, and of Lieutenants Mason and Kane, was despatched by General Taylor to reconnoitre the river for thirty miles above the camp in the direction of La Rosia. When the troopers arrived within three miles of the post they learned that the enemy had crossed and occupied the

country in considerable force. This was about twenty-eight miles from our camp, and as soon as the news was received, the guide, by name Capito, refused to proceed any further. It appears from all the documents I have been able to examine that Captain Thornton exercised a wise precaution on the march and in the disposition of his troops, by throwing out advance and rear guards although it was impossible to avail himself of the advantage of flankers in consequence of the nature of the road which was often a perfect defile, admitting, at times, of the passage only of a single horseman. As he had reason to doubt the fidelity of his guide, he resolved to advance without him, redoubling, however, his vigilance, and increasing his van guard, under the command of Lieutenant Mason, whom he ordered not to fire upon the enemy unless assaulted. The rear was assigned to Captain Hardee, and, in this order, the party cautiously proceeded until it reached a large plantation bordering the river and hemmed in by a fence of lofty and impenetrable chapparal. Captain Thornton endeavored to approach the houses at the upper end of this enclosure by entering its lower extremity, but failing to accomplish his object, he passed around the thicket and reached the field across a pair of bars which served for gateway. The edifice was situated about two hundred yards from this narrow aperture in the bristling wall, and, towards it, the whole command directed its steps in single file, without placing a sentinel at the bars, or observing any other precaution to prevent surprise. It seems that Captain Thornton, though a skilful and brave officer, as his campaigns against the Indians in Florida had proved, was prepossessed with the idea that the Mexicans had not crossed the river, and that even if they had, they would not fight. It was a fatal mistake. Captain Hardee, as has been stated, was charged with the rear

guard and was therefore the last to enter with his horsemen. As he approached the dwelling he perceived the troopers who were already within the enclosure scattered in every direction seeking for some one with whom to communicate. At length an old Mexican was discovered, and, while Thornton was conversing with him, the alarm was given that the enemy were seen in numbers at the bars. This was a bewildering surprise. Yet the gallant commander immediately gave the order to charge and personally led the advance to cut his way through the Mexicans. But it was too late; the enemy had already secured the entrance, and it was impossible to force their serried lines. Cooped and hampered as were our men within the impervious walls of chapparal and aloes, their flight was almost hopeless. The Mexican infantry had been stationed in the field on the right of the road while their cavalry lined the exterior fence, so that our retreat was entirely cut off. Seeing this, Thornton turned to the right, and skirted the interior of the chapparal with his command, whilst the enemy poured in their vollies in every direction. By this time disorder was triumphant. Hardee dashed up to Thornton and urged that the only hope of safety was in concentrated action and in the destruction of the fence; but, though the order was immediately given, he could neither stop his men nor his horse. Our troopers, perfectly ensnared, seem to have become frantic with rage, and consequently to have lost the control of discipline. Like so many animals at bay, each one sought safety for himself, by attempting to traverse or leap the thorny boundaries of the farm. Yet all efforts were useless, for, by this time, the enemy had gained on our men with great numbers, and, completely surrounded as the plantation was, nothing remained but to surrender according to the usages of civilized nations. General Torrejon, who com-

manded the Mexicans, received the submission of Captain Hardee; and, together with Lieutenant Kane, who had also been captured, he was conducted to Matamoros on the 27th, where they were lodged with General Ampudia and treated most graciously by Arista. Forty-five of our cavalry were taken prisoners in this disastrous affair, but the brave Mason was slain during the conflict. Sergeant Tredo, a valiant soldier, fell in the first charge;—Sergeant Smith was unhorsed and killed,—and the bodies of seven men were found on the field of strife.*

This was a disheartening event for the Americans, and a subject of exultation for the Mexicans. It was neither a battle nor even an affray; yet, bearing to warfare the same relation that trapping does to sportsmanship, it nevertheless afforded material for Mexican gasconade. "This,"—said Arista in his letter of acknowledgment to Torrejon,—"has been a day of rejoicing to the division of the north which has just received the joyous news of the triumph of your brigade. The delighted country will celebrate this preliminary to the glorious deeds that her happy sons will in future present her!" For some days it was supposed that Thornton had been slain, but on the 29th his comrades were delighted to hear that he had cut his way through the enemy, and after running the gauntlet of his foes, had been captured only in consequence of the fall of his horse.

As soon as Ampudia assumed the command he ordered all Americans to leave Matamoros within twenty-four hours for Victoria, a town in the interior of Tamaulipas; and on the twelfth of April he addressed a note to General Taylor requiring him, within the same peremptory

* Captains Thornton's and Hardee's reports to General Taylor. H. of R. doc. No. 119, 29th cong. 2d sess. pp. 19 and 20.

period of time to break up his camp, and retire to the other bank of the Nueces, whilst their respective governments were deciding their quarrel by negotiation. He informed our commander that if he persisted in remaining on the alleged soil of Tamaulipas, arms, alone, could decide the dispute, but that the war, which would necessarily ensue, should be conducted, upon the part of Mexico, conformably to the principles and rights established by the civilized world. General Taylor did not delay his reply. On the same day he answered the Mexican chief, that inasmuch as he was charged with the military and not the diplomatic duties of the controversy, he could not discuss the international question involved in the advance of the American army, but that he would unhesitatingly continue to occupy the positions he held at Isabel and opposite Matamoros in spite of all menaces. The hostile declarations and alternative presented by Ampudia induced Taylor to order the stringent blockade of the Rio Grande, so as to stop all supplies for the city, and the naval commander at the Brazos de Santiago was directed to dispose his forces accordingly. A body of Texan rangers, under the command of Captain Walker, a tried and daring soldier of the frontier, was stationed on the road to Point Isabel. During the night of the 27th and 28th of April, the troops, at the latter place, consisting chiefly of two companies of artillery, under the command of Major Monroe, were in momentary expectation of attack in consequence of rumors from the enemy, for it was known that large bodies of Mexicans had crossed the river and were striving to interpose themselves between Isabel and the fort opposite Matamoros in order to cut off supplies for the garrison. Several teams that departed from the depot for the fort were forced to return, and, on the morning of the

28th the camp of Walker was surprised on the prairie by a party of bold rancheros who killed five of our rangers and dispersed the rest, while the officer of the company and half of his command were absent on detached service.

By this time the works opposite Matamoros were well advanced, yet, owing to the peculiar nature of the country and our deficiency in the proper description of light troops, we were kept in ignorance of the enemy's movements on the left bank. It was ascertained, however, with sufficient certainty, that they were continuing to throw considerable forces on the eastern shore, with the design of attacking our command; and General Taylor received information, upon which he could rely, that Arista had prepared to pass the Rio Grande, below Matamoros, in order to effect a junction with his forces from above. It was not believed, however, that he would assault the position opposite that city even with four thousand men, and hence our commander-in-chief supposed that the depot at Isabel was the object of his movement. This impression was strengthened by the fact that since a rigid blockade of the river was maintained, provisions had become exceedingly scarce at Matamoros; and, therefore, hastening the completion of the field work, he was able by great exertions on the part of our troops, to bring it to a good state of defence by the first of May. The seventh infantry under Major Brown, Captain Lowd's and Lieutenant Bragg's companies of artillery, together with the sick of the army, were left in the work; and, on the afternoon of that day, General Taylor moved with the main force under his immediate command in the direction of Point Isabel. At eleven o'clock, the army, by a rapid march, was enabled to bivouack on the prairie at a distance of ten miles from the depot, and on the next day, it reached its destination without encountering the enemy, though the scouts

surprised and shot several men belonging to the Mexican pickets.

On the morning and during the day of the 3d of May, a heavy canonnade in the direction of Matamoros announced to General Taylor that an attack had probably been commenced on the American fort. This was a different result from his anticipations, and made him extremely anxious for the fate of the small but brave command that had been left, with slender supplies of rations and ammunition, in the incomplete field work.

Accordingly, on the evening of that day, a squadron of one hundred dragoons under Captain May, accompanied by Walker and ten of his daring rangers, was despatched to pass, if possible, through the hordes of Mexican guerillas that lined the road. They were ordered to proceed within a few miles of Fort Brown and reconnoitre the country on the left towards the river; next to take a position on the edge of the chapparal, and, if the commander heard no firing from our fort, he was then to despatch a small command under Walker to communicate with Major Brown. After this he was to await the return of the gallant rangers, and repair to Point Isabel.

May and his troopers, alert for such an adventurous enterprize, stole onward towards Matamoros, under cover of night, and, about nine o'clock, beheld the enemy's camp fires on the field of Palo Alto. Avoiding the outposts and cautiously circling the Mexican front, he passed the foe, and galloped towards the American fort, until, hearing no sound of cannon in that direction, he halted with his command under the protecting screen of an extensive chapparal, about seven miles from Matamoros. Here he detached Walker and six of his rangers, best skilled in woodcraft, to communicate

according to orders, with Major Brown, while he awaited their return in his concealed position.

It was between two and three o'clock in the morning that Walker crept up to the bastions of our fort and was hailed by the sentinel. As soon as he was recognized his party was placed in a secure position, and the bold ranger admitted by a ladder to the fort. Major Brown reported the facts of the assault from Matamoros and the condition of his defences, as speedily as possible, and Walker and his men, mounting fresh horses, dashed off towards May so as to pass the enemy's lines before day-light. But, as he approached the thicket where he left the command, he found the troopers gone; and returning to the fort, which he reached before *reveille*, he awaited the approach of night before he again attempted to perform his dangerous service.

Meanwhile May and his men had remained in their saddles until about half an hour before day, when, from the protracted absence of the ranger, they believed that the enemy's scouts had detected him. Walker had been already away about six hours; and as May's force was unable to cope with the supposed numbers of the Mexicans, and peremptory orders had been given to retire to Isabel, he immediately passed down the enemy's lines at a brisk gallop over the prairie. About twelve miles from our camp he suddenly discovered a hundred and fifty lancers drawn up across the road to dispute his passage, but speedily forming his line, he charged the troop, and, driving it towards the Mexican camp, followed the fugitives for three miles on his wearied horses. Fearing, however, that larger forces might be lying in ambush in the fields, and perceiving that the enemy's cavalry was fleeter than his own, he abandoned the pursuit and reached Point Isabel about nine o'clock.

But Walker was not to be defeated in his gallant effort to bear tidings to Taylor of the fortunes of the fort. As soon as it was dark on the 4th, he remounted with his trusty band and concealed on his person the despatch which Major Brown had prepared in the interval. Every copse and thicket along the road, suitable for an ambush, was filled with foes anxious to cut off his return to camp, for, as it was subsequently ascertained, the Mexicans had obtained information of his purposes. But Walker passed unhurt through all these impediments, and brought the cheerful news that all was as yet safe in the staunch little fort.

Late in April, and while the events, related in this chapter, were occurring, by which it became evident that serious hostilities were, at length, intended, General Taylor prudently began to strengthen his army by demands for reinforcements under the discretionary powers vested in him by government. In March, he had already called the notice of the war department to the necessity of sending recruits to fill up the regiments even to the extent of the existing feeble establishment; but, in April he authorized the raising of two companies of mounted men from Texas, and called upon the governor of that State for four regiments of volunteers, two of which were to act as cavalry and two to serve on foot. As some delay might occur in collecting these troops, he, moreover, desired the governor of Louisiana to despatch four regiments of infantry as soon as practicable, and, with this auxiliary force of nearly five thousand men, he hoped to prosecute the impending war with energy, or to carry it, if needful, into the enemy's country.

On the sixth of May, Lieutenant McPhail reached Point Isabel with some recruits for the army; and, after filling up the permanent garrison with the men who were still too raw

to encounter the dangers of actual field service, General Taylor determined to march on the following day with the main body of the forces to open a communication with Major Brown and to throw forward the needful supplies of ordnance and provisions. The language of our chief did not betoken the fears which, at that moment, were felt throughout the country for the fate of his brave command, surrounded as it was believed to be, by an imposing army of Mexicans led by their bravest generals. "If the enemy oppose my march, in whatever force," said Taylor, "*I shall fight him!*" It was this little phrase that inspirited the anxious heart of his country and denoted the energetic character of the hero whose skill and genius were so soon to be developed in active warfare. When he marched from the banks of the Rio Grande on the 1st of May, the Mexicans believed that he fled to secure his personal safety at Point Isabel, whilst he abandoned the infantry and artillery in the fort opposite Matamoros as an easy prey to their valiant arms. Accordingly, the bells of the city rang their merry peals, and repeated bursts of military music denoted that it was a gala day in the ancient city. At that moment the great body of the Mexican army crossed the stream under the orders of General Torrejon, and these were the forces that Walker and his rangers had eluded while bearing to Isabel the cheering despatch from Major Brown.

At the close of this chapter, and while we are preparing for graver subjects, it may not be uninteresting for the reader to obtain a careful picture of those TEXAN RANGERS, whose services had already proved so useful, and who were to play an important part in this bloody drama.

These were the bold and reckless children of the frontier, who lived forever in warlike harness, prompt to suppress the

savage raids of the Indians and mongrel Mexicans who harrassed the settlements of western Texas in the neighborhood of the Guadalupe, La Vaca and San Antonio. Organizing themselves in regular companies for mutual protection along a ravaged border, they were continually prepared alike for camp or battle, and opposed themselves to the enemy at the outpost barriers of civilization.

It must not be supposed that men whose life is passed in the forest, on the saddle, or around the fire of a winter bivouack, can present the gallant array of troopers on parade, hence the Texan Ranger is careless of external appearance, and adapts his dress strictly to the wants of useful service. His first care is to provide himself with a stalwart and nimble horse, perfectly broken and capable of enduring fatigue in a southern climate. His Spanish saddle, or saddle frame, is carefully covered with the skins of wild animals, while, from its sides depend some twenty or thirty leatheren thongs to which are attached all the various trappings needed in the woods. No baggage is permitted to accompany the troop and encumber it in the wilderness. A braided *lariat* and a *cabaros* of horse-hair are coiled around his saddle-bow, the latter to be unwound at nightfall and laid in circles on the ground to prevent the approach of reptiles which glide off from the sleeper when they touch the bristling hair of the instrument, while his horse, tethered by the long and pliant *lariat* trailing along the ground, wanders but little from the spot where his master reposes.

Stout buckskin leggings, hunting shirt, and cap, protect the ranger's body from the sharp spines of aloes, or the briars and branches of the matted forest. His weapons, next to his horse, exact his attention. His long and heavy rifle carries from fifty to sixty bullets to the pound; around his waist is belted a bowie-knife or home made hanger, and

sometimes, a brace of revolving pistols is added to this powerful armory. Across his right side are slung his pouch of balls and powder-horn, and the strap by which they are suspended is widened or padded over the shoulder to relieve the weight and presure of his gun. A practised shot, he can hit his mark unerringly in full career. He may be called a "picked man," though not in the sense of the phrase as ordinarily used in military affairs. Nevertheless he is a choice soldier, for none but men of equal stamp and hardihood find their way to the border and congregate naturally for the hazardous life they endure.

From the period of the battle of San Jacinto to the year 1841, when they formed themselves into regular squadrons of rangers, these were the hardy woodsmen, who defended the frontier as independent troops, free from the control of State or government. Whenever Indians or Mexicans approached the settlements, runners were quickly despatched along the streams to sound the alarm, and in a few hours the wild huntsmen were roused for a campaign of months. All they needed for the foray was their horse, their weapons, their blankets, their pouch with fifty balls, and their bushel of parched and pounded corn. In hot weather or cold, in wet or dry, they carried no tents, and required no fresh food save the game of the forest. Such was the Texan Ranger at the outbreak of this war,—light in heart, indomitable in courage, capable of vast endurance, and sworn in his hatred of Indians and Mexicans. His life was one of continual anxiety and surprises which made him alert and watchful. He was neither a troubadour nor a crusader, yet his mode of existence had charms for multitudes of adventurers. It was not disgust with society or disregard of its comforts that forced these knights errant to the forest and kept them in a state of continual excitement; but there was a certain de-

gree of romance in their wandering career that entitled them to respect and consideration even from the more sentimental inhabitants of cities. A life without restraint, except needful subordination when on actual duty, is always attractive, and the forester realizes it completely. Thinking much and speaking little, he considers his officer of no more value or importance than himself. Hence he yields obedience only because he knows the necessity of discipline in a hazardous service, while, off of duty, he is as familiar with his commander as with a private.

Thus the Ranger's existence has ever been a scene of fierce independence; and though approaching the *ranchero* in some of his restless habits, he has, nevertheless, always been distinguished from that vile compound of ferocity, treachery and cruelty, by the remnants of civilization he has borne to the solitudes of the wilderness. He was destined to be of infinite value to the regular army in a country where it was important to obtain information by reckless means among an almost Arab population. Subsequent events proved that no scouting service was so severe, no adventure so dangerous, that he would not risk his life and exercise the cunning of his craft in performing it either on the thorny banks of the Rio Grande or among the mountain defiles of Monterey.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE OF PALO ALTO.

On the night of the 7th of May, with a force of over two thousand men and a supply train of two hundred and fifty wagons, General Taylor bivouacked on the plains about seven miles from Point Isabel. The whole of the country is extremely flat in the neighborhood of the river and on the road to Matamoros. In some places, broad thickets cover the levels, in others, wide prairies spread out dotted, here and there, with bushes and ponds. Early on the morning of Friday, the 8th, our camp was broken up and the little army set in motion towards the fort. About noon the scouts reported that the Mexicans were drawn up in our front, covering the road with all their forces; and as soon, therefore, as we reached the broad field of Palo Alto, a halt was ordered to refresh our men, and form our line of battle with due deliberation. Far across the prairie, at the distance of three quarters of a mile, were discerned the glittering masses of the enemy. Infantry and cavalry were ranged, alternately, on the level field and stretched out for more than a mile in length, backed by the wiry limbs of the tall trees from which the battle ground has taken its name. The left wing, composed of heavy masses of horse, occupied the road, resting on a thicket of chapparal, and flanked by ponds, while large bodies of infantry were discovered on the right, greatly outnumbering our own force and standing somewhat

in a curved line, ready, as it were, to embrace our advancing columns.

Orders were directly given on the American side to form the array for action. On our extreme right were ranged the fifth infantry under Colonel McIntosh; Major Ringgold's artillery; the third infantry commanded by Captain L. M. Morris; two eighteen pounders drawn by twenty yoke of oxen and commanded by Lieutenant Churchill, and lastly, the fourth infantry under Major Allen. The third and fourth regiments, formed the third brigade under Lieutenant Colonel Garland, and all these corps, together with two squadrons of dragoons led by Ker and May, composed the right wing under the orders of Colonel Twiggs. The left was composed of a battalion of artillery commanded by Colonel Childs, Captain Duncan's light artillery, and the eighth infantry under Captain Montgomery,—all constituting the first brigade under the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Belknap. The train, meanwhile, was packed near a pond under the direction of Captains Crossman and Myers, and protected by the squadron of Ker's dragoons.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon that our march against the enemy began by heads of columns, whilst the eighteen-pounder battery followed slowly along the road. During our advance it was deemed especially important to ascertain with accuracy the number and calibre of the enemy's cannon, and for this hazardous reconnoissance on an open plain, Lieutenant Blake, of the topographical engineers, immediately volunteered. Passing the advanced guard at full speed, he dashed over the long grass that concealed the opposing forces, until he approached within about eighty yards of the line where he had a distinct view of the enemy. The Mexicans gazed with surprise at this daring act, while Blake alighted from his horse, surveyed the whole

array with his glass, counting the squadrons and ordnance carefully, and then galloped down their front to the other wing of their extended line.*

Scarcely had this gallant officer reported to our general when two of the enemy's batteries opened on us vigorously. Taylor immediately ordered our columns to halt, and deploying into line, our artillery returned the fire, whilst the eighth infantry, on our extreme left, was thrown back to secure that flank;—and, thus, with the distance of only seven hundred yards between the opposing lines, the battle began with rattling vollies of ball and grape bounding over our heads. The first fires of the enemy injured us but little, while the heavy metal of our eighteen-pounders, and the smaller shot of Ringgold's battery, quickly dispersed the masses of cavalry on the left. Duncan's battery, supported by May's dragoons, was then thrown forward on that flank, and for more than an hour the incessant thunder of a cannonade raged along both fronts, making sad gaps in the battalions, rending the prairie, filling the air with dust and smoke, killing and wounding a few, yet, producing no decided effect. The Mexicans, unskilled in gunnery, fired without precision; but, at almost every discharge of the American ordnance, the shot told with wonderful precision among the Mexicans. Our artillery was directed not only to masses and groups of the enemy, but often to particular men, so that the officers felt as certain of their aim, as if firing with rifles.

* Lieutenant Blake died about the time our fight commenced at Resaca de la Palma, on the 9th, from a wound inflicted by one of his own pistols. He had thrown his sword, to which his pistols were attached, on the ground on entering his tent. One pistol was discharged accidentally in the fall, and the ball entered his thigh, but was cut out of his breast. He died three hours afterwards.

Meanwhile our infantry had been hitherto rather spectators of the artillery's prowess, than active combatants; but as the battle thickened the manœuvreing of the enemy to outflank us commenced. With infinitely smaller forces than the Mexicans, our policy had been to act on the defensive as much as possible, and to *feel* the enemy before we engaged at closer quarters. Hence we awaited their first assault, made by a regiment of Mexican lancers led by Torrejon and supported by two pieces of artillery, which threatened our right flank by moving through the chapparal in the direction of our train. The fifth infantry was immediately detached together with a section of Ringgold's battery and Walker's Texans, to check this dangerous movement. The gallant regiment was thrown into a square with the Ranger and twenty of his troopers on its right, and thus stood ready to repulse the charge. On came the advancing squadrons in splendid array, moving in solid masses of men and horse, each lance tipped with its gay and fluttering pennon. Ringgold, from his advanced position, galled them as they trotted onward; Ridgely, from his closer ground, poured into them rapid vollies of grape and cannister; still they surged onward in spite of all resistance. At length, when within shot of the impervious square, suddenly, a sheet of deadly flame burst from the regiment, and breaking their array, forced them to recoil in confusion. Nevertheless the daring troop was not dismayed by the carnage. Forming rapidly from its ruins an imposing mass, again it dashed towards the train, until the third infantry on our extreme right, under the orders of Colonel Twiggs, crippled its advance so completely, that it was impossible to rally. This was the last effort of the brave lancers. Repulsed in every effort, they began to retreat rapidly but in order; yet Ringgold, Ridgely, and the regiments of infantry, still hung upon

their flank, and with their terrible discharges of grape and bullets, mowed wide openings in the flying ranks until they reached their line. Meantime the incessant blaze of our artillery had set fire to the withered prairie, whose tall grasses touched the very muzzles of our guns, and for a while the armies were concealed from each other in the mingled smoke of the recent battle and of the burning field.

There was a pause in the conflict, as if the two combatants, like gallant boxers, stopped a moment to take breath and survey each other with looks of defiance. The enemy's left had been driven back in confusion; and, as their cannonade ceased, the road remained free for the advance of our eighteen-pounders close to the first position that had been occupied by the Mexican cavalry. This was promptly ordered by General Taylor who caused the first brigade to take a new post on the left of that formidable battery. The fifth was also advanced to the extreme right of our new line, while the train was moved accordingly to suit the altered front. As the battalion of artillery advanced slowly over the field it came up to a private of the fifth, a gallant veteran of the old world who had escaped the fires of Austerlitz and Waterloo to die at Palo Alto. He was one of the first who fell in the action, and as his fellow soldiers paused a moment to compassionate his sufferings, when they saw the blood gushing with each pulsation from his shattered limbs—he waved them onward—"Go on companions, regardless of me,"—shouted he,—"I've got but what a soldier enlists for,—strike the enemy;—let *me* die?" Such were the exclamations of Napoleon's soldiers, at Marengo, when the advancing squadrons of cavalry hesitated to leap over the heaps of wounded Frenchmen: "Tread on *me* comrades; make a bridge of my body! Long live France! Vive la

liberte!" The romantic fervor of warlike enthusiasm deprives battle of half its horrors, and makes death on the field a glorious exit from the sufferings of humanity.

The movements we made in changing our line were answered by corresponding alterations of the Mexican front, and, after a suspension of action for nearly an hour the battle was resumed. The effect of these changes was to edge our right flank somewhat nearer Matamoros, and to enable our forces to hold the road against the Mexicans who rested their lines on the thickets in their rear.

The attack was recommenced by a destructive fire of artillery. Wide openings were continually torn in the enemy's ranks by our marksmen, and the constancy with which the Mexican infantry endured the incessant hurricane of shot was the theme of universal admiration. Captain May, detached with his squadron to make a demonstration on the left of the enemy, suffered severely from the copper grape of the Mexican artillery. Whilst passing the general and his staff with his troopers, the enemy concentrated the fire of their batteries upon him, killing six of his horses and wounding five dragoons. Nevertheless he succeeded in gaining his desired position in order to charge the cavalry, but found the foe in such overwhelming numbers as to render utterly ineffectual any assault by his small command. The fourth infantry, which had been commanded to support the eighteen-pounders, was also exposed to a galling fire by which several men were killed and Captain Page mortally wounded. The great effort of the Mexicans was to silence that powerful battery, whose patient oxen had dragged it into the midst of the fight. Hence they directed their aim almost exclusively upon these tremendous pieces and upon

the light artillery of Major Ringgold, who was fatally struck by a cannon ball at this period of the conflict.*

Meanwhile the battalion of artillery under Colonel Childs had been brought up to support the artillery on our right, and a strong demonstration of cavalry was now made by the enemy against this part of our line, while the column continued to advance under a severe fire from the eighteen-pounders. The battalion was instantly formed into square and held ready to receive the charge; but when the advancing squadrons were within close range, a storm of canister from the eighteen-pounders dispersed them. A rattling discharge of small arms was then opened upon the square, but well aimed vollies from its front soon silenced all further efforts of the Mexicans in that quarter. It was now nearly dark, and the action terminated on our right, as the enemy were completely driven back from their position and foiled in every attempt either to break or outflank our gallant lines.

While these actions were occurring on our right under the eye of General Taylor, the Mexicans had made a serious attempt against our left. The smoke hung densely over the field and bushes so as almost to obscure the armies from each other, and under cover of this misty veil and of approaching night, the enemy suddenly rushed towards that wing and the train with an immense body of cavalry and infantry under the command of Colonel Montero. The movement was rapid and daring, but it did not escape the quick eye of Duncan, who dashed back with his battery to the left flank in full view of the enemy and engaged them within point blank range of his deadly guns. So sudden and unexpected was this gallant manœuvre to the enemy, who, a mo-

* Ringgold died the day after the battle, but Page survived some time though he was shockingly mangled by the ball which shot off the lower part of his face.

ment before, saw this battery disappear in the opposite direction behind the smoke of the burning prairie,—that their whole column halted in amazement before a shot had been fired or a gun unlimbered. But they were neither repulsed nor dismayed. A strong body of infantry, supported by two squadrons of cavalry, debouched from the extreme right of the chapparal, and moved steadily forward to attack us. One section of Duncan's battery began to play upon them with round shot, shells, and spherical case, so well directed that the whole advance, both horse and foot, fell back in disorder to the bushes. Meantime the other section opened upon the masses of cavalry that halted at the first sight of our approaching guns, and although these shots were well delivered and each tore a vista through an entire squadron, the enemy remained unshaken. At every discharge the havoc was frightfully destructive, but the gaps in the Mexican ranks were immediately closed with fresh horsemen as they pressed on to assail us.

The column of cavalry and infantry, driven back into the chapparal by the other section, re-formed in the thicket, and, a second time, dauntlessly advanced in order. After it approached about a hundred yards from the screen of bushes, the section that was previously ordered to repel it, re-opened a deadly fire and drove the foe head long into the forest. The supporting cavalry rushed back upon the ranks that hitherto withstood our shot, and the hurried retreat became a perfect rout. Squadron after squadron joined tumultuously in the race, and the whole right wing of the Mexicans was soon in rapid flight, while our relentless sections continued to send their vollies into the broken and scampering columns until they disappeared in the chapparal or were lost in the darkness of night. Thus ended the brilliant affair of Palo Alto. The enemy retired behind a protecting wood, and

our army bivouacked on the ground it had won and occupied during the protracted fight

Both parties slept on the battle field. It had been a fierce and dreadful passage of arms, yet it was not a decided victory. We had repulsed the Mexicans, fatally, in every attempt; we had gained a better position, enabling us to press onward towards Matamoros, and had inflicted serious injury on the foe; but the enemy still rested on their arms and seemed disposed to dispute the field with us again on the morrow. They were sadly crippled though not defeated, and had exhibited a degree of nerve, mettle, and firmness that was entirely unexpected from the vanquished soldiery of San Jacinto.

Wearied by the excessive labor of nearly six hours fighting, our infantry and artillery sank on the ground wherever they found a resting place, whilst the alert dragoons circled the sleeping camp and rode on their outposts, among heaps of the enemy whose dying groans were heard on all sides from the thickets to which they had crept. All night long the medical staff was busy in its work of mercy, while the officers who felt the dangerous responsibility of their situation collected in groups to discuss their prospects. Some were doubtful of success, some anxious to obtain reinforcements, some full of hope and animation, but all were satisfied that it was prudent to hold a council on the impending fortunes of the army. After a full examination of the difficulties and a proper display of their resources, the enthusiasm of the young and the experience of the old, alike, sanctioned the heroic determination of Taylor to advance without succor. This brave resolve reassured the army, and all prepared with alacrity and confidence for the dangers of the 9th.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BATTLE OF RESACA DE LA PALMA—DEFENCE OF FORT BROWN—THE GREAT WESTERN.

When the sun rose on the morning of the 9th a mist of mingled smoke and vapor hung over the battle field of Palo Alto, but, as the haze lifted from the levels, the Mexicans were perceived retreating by their left flank, in order, perhaps, to gain a more advantageous position on the road in which they might resist our progress towards Matamoros. This movement inspirited our troops, who, craving the interest of a new position, were loath to repeat the battle of yesterday on the same field. Accordingly General Taylor ordered the supply train to be parked at its position and left under the guard of two twelve-pounders and the fatal eighteens which had done such signal service on the 8th. The wounded men and officers were next despatched to Point Isabel, and we then moved across the Llano Burro towards the edge of the dense chapparal which extends for a distance of seven miles to the Rio Grande. The light companies of the first brigade under Captain Smith, of the second artillery; and a select detachment of light troops, all commanded by Captain McCall, were thrown forward into the thickets to feel the enemy and ascertain the position he finally took.

In our advance we crossed the ground occupied by the Mexicans on the 8th where their line had been mowed by our

artillery. Shattered limbs, riven skulls, slain and wounded horses, dying men, military accoutrements, gun stocks and bayonets lay strewn around, the terrible evidences of war and havoc. As our men pressed on they encountered, at every step, appeals to their humanity, from the famished and thirsty remnants of the Mexican army whose wounds did not permit them to advance with their compatriots; but it may be recorded to the honor of the troops, that our maimed enemies were in no instance left without succor, and that officers and men vied with each other in relieving their wants and despatching them to our hospitals.

About three o'clock in the afternoon a report was sent from the scouts that the enemy were again in position on the road, which they held with at least two pieces of artillery. The command was immediately put in motion, and, about an hour after, came up with Captain McCall.

The field of Palo Alto was an open plain, well adapted for the fair fight of a pitched battle, but Resaca de la Palma, which we now approached, possessed altogether different features. The position was naturally strong, and had been judiciously seized by the Mexicans. The matted masses of chapparal, sprinkled in spots with small patches of prairie, formed an almost impassable barrier on both sides of the road along which we were forced to advance. The Resaca de la Palma, or, Ravine of the Palm, fifty yards wide and nearly breast high, crosses the road at right angles, and then bends, at both ends, in the shape of a horse shoe. The low portions of the gully are generally filled with water, forming long and winding ponds through the prairie, whilst, in the rainy season, these pools unite across the ridge which forms the road and flow off towards the Rio Grande. Along the banks of this ravine the thickets of chapparal, nourished by the neighboring water, grow more densely than

elsewhere, and, at the period of the battle, formed a solid wall penetrated only by the highway.

It was along the edges of this hollow that the Mexicans, led by Arista and Ampudia, had posted themselves in two lines,—one under the front declivity, and the other entrenched behind the copse of chapparal which shielded the bank in the rear. In the centre of each line, on the right and left of the road, a battery was placed, whilst other batteries were disposed so as to assail us in flank. In this strongly fortified position, supported by infantry, cavalry and ordnance, several thousand Mexicans stood around the curving limits of the ravine, ready to rake us with their terrible cross-fires as we advanced by the road between the horns of the crescent.*

It will be perceived, from this description, that the character of the action was essentially changed from the affair of the 8th. Almost entrenched as were the Mexicans behind the ravine and chapparal, they now stood on the defensive resolutely awaiting our assault, whilst, at Palo Alto, they had assumed an offensive attitude, aiming either to capture or destroy our army.

In the passage of our troops between Matamoros and Point Isabel, the practiced eye of our military men often remarked the value of this ravine as a point of strength; and it had been already supposed that when the enemy halted, to resist our march, they would avail themselves of it for a battle ground. Hence this excellent position was not unknown to General Taylor, and he promptly prepared a combined attack of infantry, artillery and cavalry by which he might succeed in driving the American army like a wedge, through the narrow but only aperture that admitted its transit to our fort.

* Army on the Rio Grande, p. 93, and see plan of the battle.

Accordingly, as soon as Captain McCall received his orders, in the earlier part of the day, he advanced with his men, and directed Captain C. F. Smith, of the second artillery, with the light company of the first brigade, to move to the right of the road, whilst he proceeded on the left with a detachment of artillery and infantry. Walker and a small force of rangers was despatched to make a hazardous reconnoissance of the road in front, while Lieutenant Plesanton, with a few of the second dragoons, marched in rear of the columns of infantry.

After following the trail of the enemy for about two miles and a half across the Llano Burro, and learning from Walker that the road was clear, McCall pushed the rangers into the chapparal, within supporting distance, and soon dislodged some parties of Mexicans. On reaching the open ground near Resaca, the head of his column received three rounds of canister from a masked battery, which forced his men to take cover, after killing one private and wounding two sergeants. They rapidly rallied however, and Captain Smith's detachment being brought to the left of the road, it was proposed to attack by a flank movement, what, at the moment, was supposed to be only the rear guard of the retiring army. But after a quick examination of the field by Dobbins and McCoun, who discovered large bodies of Mexicans in motion on our left, while the road, in front, was held by lancers, McCall resolved to despatch three dragoons to the commander in chief with the news and await his arrival.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon that General Taylor came up with the skirmishers and received an exact report of the enemy's position. Lieutenant Ridgely, who, upon the Major's fall, had succeeded to the command of Ringgold's battery, was immediately ordered to advance on the highway, while the fifth infantry and one wing of the

fourth were thrown into the chapparal with McCall's command on the left, at the same time that the third and the other wing of the fourth entered the thicket on the right with Smith's detachment. These corps were employed to cover the battery, to act as skirmishers, and engage the Mexican infantry. The action, at once became general, spirited and bloody, for although the enemy's infantry gave way before the steady fire and resistless progress of our own, yet his artillery was still in position to check our advance by means of the fatal pieces which commanded the pass through the ravine.

This was the moment, however, when the centre was destined to be penetrated and broken—Ridgely, as has been stated, had been ordered to the road, and, after advancing cautiously for a short distance, he descried the enemy about four hundred yards in advance. Pressing onward until within perfect range of his guns he began to play upon the foe with deadly discharges. But the resolute Mexicans were not to be repulsed. Returning shot for shot, their grape surged through our battery in every direction, yet without repulsing the intrepid Ridgely, who, as soon as the opposing fire slackened, limbered up and moved rapidly forward, never unlimbering unless he perceived the enemy in front or found from the fire of their infantry that they still hung upon his flank. During this fierce advance into the jaws of the Mexican crescent, he frequently threw into it discharges of canister when not over one hundred yards from the opposing batteries and their support.

After hammering the centre for some time with this iron hail, and keeping the wings of the Mexicans engaged with the other troops, a movement with dragoons was planned for the final onslaught. May, with his powerful corps, was directed to report to the general, and immediately received

orders from Taylor to charge the enemy's battery. Thridding the mazes of the chapparal and of the road with his dense squadron he came up with Ridgely, and halting a moment while that gallant soldier poured a volley into the enemy, which was answered by a shower of rattling grape, he dashed at the head of his troopers, like lightning from the midst of the cloud of smoke, over the guns of the astonished Mexicans. As the dragoons rushed at full tilt, with gleaming swords, along the road, the artillerists leaped upon their pieces and cheered them on. The infantry in the chapparal took up the shout, and before the combined thunder of cannon, huzzas, and galloping cavalry had died away, May and his troopers had charged through the seven opposing pieces, and rose again on the heights in rear of the ravine. Graham, Winship and Pleasanton led the movement on the left of the road, whilst the captain, with Inge, Stevens and Sackett, bore off to the right. But, after gaining the elevation, only six dragoons could be rallied, and with these May charged back upon the gunners who had regained their pieces, drove them off, and took prisoner the brave La Vega who stood to his unwavering artillery during the heat of the dreadful onslaught.

Meanwhile Ridgely, as soon as May had passed him, followed the charge at a gallop, only halting on the edge of the ravine where he found three pieces of deserted artillery. Here the Mexican infantry poured into him a galling fire at a distance of not more than fifty paces, and a most desperate and murderous struggle ensued, for the charge of cavalry had not been promptly sustained by the infantry in consequence of the difficulty it experienced in struggling through the masses of chapparal. It was about this time that the eighth regiment was encountered by May who informed Colonel Belknap of the exploit which had been ren-

dered almost unavailing for want of supporting infantry. Belknap promptly ordered the regiment to form on the road with a part of the fifth, whence, it was impetuously charged on the enemy's guns. This admirable assault was executed with the greatest celerity; the battery was secured; the infantry sprang across the ravine amidst a sheet of fire from front and right, and drove the supporting column before it, destroying in vast numbers the troops that pertinaciously resisted until forced headlong from the fatal hollow. Montgomery with his regiment pursued the Mexicans vigorously into the chapparal on the opposite side of the Resaca until from their rapid flight, further attempts were utterly useless.

Thus was the centre of the enemy's lines completely broken. The task would be endless were I to recount the valiant deeds of the American and Mexican wings in the thickets on the right and left of the road. It was a short but severe onset, disputed on both sides, with an intrepidity that resembled rather the bitterness of a personal conflict than a regular battle. The nature of the ground among the groves was such as to forbid any thing but close quarters and the use of the bayonet, knife, or sword. Officers and men fought side by side, supporting more than leading each other upon the opposing ranks. Bayonets were crossed, swords clashed, stalwart arms held foes at bay, and American and Mexican rolled side by side on the blood stained earth.

I have dwelt upon the action in the centre because it controlled the road, dispersed the foe and won the day; but the effort would be invidious were I to relate instances of individual hardihood and skill, when all the valiant actors in the drama were fearless and unfaltering. The charge of May was not unlike the assault at Waterloo of Ponsonby's victorious cavalry, supported by Vandeleur's light horse, upon the

twenty-four pieces of D'Erlon's battery; in regard to which Napoleon was heard to exclaim, in the heat of the battle,—"How terribly those gray horsemen fight!" But in that conflict, Frenchmen opposed the Anglo-saxons, and Milhaud's steel clad curiassiers, charging Ponsonby's brigade after it had carried the guns and attacked even a third line of artillery and lancers, readily overcame the exhausted troopers and slew their gallant leader.

At Resaca de la Palma, however the result was different. The artillery battalion, which, with the exception of the flank companies, had been ordered to guard the train on the morning of the 9th, was now ordered up to pursue the routed enemy; and the third infantry, Ker's dragoons and Duncan's battery followed the Mexicans rapidly to the river. Shouting, singing, almost frantic with delight at their eminent success, our men rushed after the flying Mexicans. The pursuit became a perfect rout as they pressed on to the banks of the Rio Grande, and numbers of the enemy were drowned in attempting the passage of the fatal stream. The pursuing corps encamped near the Rio Grande, while the remainder of the army rested for the night on the field of battle. The want of a *ponton train** prevented us from following the foe across the river on the night of the 9th; but, as the government had failed to provide General Taylor with that useful equipage, notwithstanding his frequent warnings of its need, he was deprived of the first chance in this war to annihilate the Mexican army and to seize all the arms and ammunition collected in Matamoros. The capture, however, of Arista's camp and its equipage was a recompense

*In May 1846, *after these battles*, an act of Congress was finally passed authorising the organization of a company of sappers, miners and pontoniers. The war department had not the right to form such a corps previous to this enactment.

for our men who had fought so bravely. The Mexican chief had gone into the campaign with every comfort around him, and was evidently unprepared for defeat at Resaca de La Palma, for, at the moment of our victory, his camp-kettles were found simmering over the fires filled with viands from which he had doubtless designed to make a savory meal after our capture. The food however was destined to other uses; and, after a communication with the fort which held out staunchly against the enemy during both contests, our men sat down to enjoy the repast which the Mexicans had cooked.

Unable as we were to secure the best results of victory, from the cause already narrated, these battles were, nevertheless, of great importance. We had achieved success in the face of brave foes outnumbering us more than two to one, and had conquered an army of Mexican veterans, perfectly equipped and appointed. In the battle of Palo Alto our force, engaged, had been one hundred and seventy-seven officers, two thousand one hundred and eleven men, or an aggregate of two thousand two hundred and eighty-eight;—in the action of Resaca de la Palma we brought into the field one hundred and seventy-three officers and two thousand and forty nine men, or, an aggregate of two thousand two hundred and twenty-two, while the actual number *engaged* with the enemy did not exceed seventeen hundred. In the first affair we had nine killed, forty-four wounded* and two missing; but in the second, our loss was three officers and thirty-six men killed, and seventy-one wounded. Lieutenant Inge fell at the head of his platoon while charging with May; Lieutenants Cochrane and Chadburne likewise

* Page and Ringgold died subsequently

met their death in the thickest of the fight; while Lieutenant Colonels Payne and McIntosh; Captains Montgomery and Hooe; and Lieutenants Fowler, Dobbins, Gates, Jordan, Selden, Maclay, Burbank and Morris, were wounded on the field of Resaca de la Palma.

The Mexican army, under Arista and Ampudia, amounted to at least six thousand men, having been strongly reinforced with cavalry and infantry after the battle of the 8th; and it is highly probable that the whole of this force was opposed to us in their choice position. In one of his despatches, after the battles, Arista confesses that he still had under arms four thousand troops exclusive of numerous auxiliaries, and that he lost in the affair at Palo Alto four officers and ninety-eight men killed;—eleven officers and one hundred and sixteen men wounded, and twenty-six privates and non-commissioned officers missing;—while in the battle of Resaca de la Palma, six officers and one hundred and fifty-four men were slain; twenty-three officers and two hundred and five wounded, and three officers and one hundred and fifty-six missing,—making a total loss of seven hundred and fifty-five. Eight pieces of artillery, several colors and standards, a great number of prisoners, including fourteen officers, and a large quantity of camp equipage, muskets, small arms, mules, horses, pack-saddles, subsistence, personal baggage, and private as well as regimental papers, fell into our hands. The plan of campaign, as alleged to have been developed by Arista's port-folio, was based upon the "reconquest of the lost province," into which the Mexican forces were to have been pushed as soon as our army was demolished on the Rio Grande. If it should be necessary to secure the fruits of victory by further military efforts, it was arranged that ample reinforcements were to be brought into the field, and subsequently that President Paredes,

himself, should march an army of occupation into Texas and bear his conquering eagles to the Sabine!

After this narrative of our actions in the field let us recur for a moment to the gallant garrison which had been shut up in the fort since the beginning of the month, and in regard to whose fate the liveliest anxiety was experienced.

When the commander-in-chief departed on the 1st of May to open the line of communication with Point Isabel, prevent an attack upon the depot, and, finally, to succor the fort with subsistence and munitions, the field work, though capable of defence, was not completed. The events of the few preceding days had denoted a resolution on the part of the Mexicans to assail us immediately, and warned our small garrison to prepare for all emergencies. Accordingly the labor of ditching and embanking on the unfinished front was resumed; but neither the draw-bridge nor the interior defences were yet commenced, and to all these works, Mansfield, with his engineers and detachments of infantry, devoted themselves unceasingly during the whole of the bombardment, which began at day-break, on Sunday, the 3d of May.

The Mexicans had been engaged for some time erecting fortifications along the river front of their town opposite our field work, and by this time had prepared them for action. They commenced their attack from the fort and mortar battery called *La redonda*, which they had placed under the orders of a French officer of artillery, who manifested a perfect knowledge of his profession during the conflict. Nine pieces of ordnance,—four mortars, and the remainder six and eight-pounders,—poured into our works an incessant shower of shot and shells; but our batteries returned the fire so effectually, that in thirty minutes, *La redonda* was

abandoned. Passing from this fortification to another lower down, the enemy again opened upon us from *La fortina de la flecha*, as well as from intermediate batteries and a mortar in their vicinity. It soon became evident that our six-pounders produced no serious effects in consequence of the distance; and, desiring to husband his resources for greater emergencies, Major Brown ordered the firing to cease entirely on our side of the river. The garrison had been left with only one hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition for each eighteen-pounder while the six-pounders were as badly provided!

The silence of our guns in the presence of an assailing foe, disheartened our men for an instant, but they immediately betook themselves energetically to their task on the defences, though the enemy's shells exploded in every direction about them. On the 4th the Mexicans again resumed the fight and continued their vollies until midnight. At nine o'clock on that evening irregular discharges of musketry were heard in our rear apparently extending a mile up the river, and continuing until near the termination of the cannonade. Every soldier in the fort therefore stood to his arms all night long, manning each battery and point of defence in expectation of an assault from the forces that had crossed the river and filled the adjacent plains and thickets. But the anxious night passed without an attack at close quarters, and, at day-light, on the 5th, the enemy again commenced their fire from the distant batteries. The sound of war was gratifying to the Mexicans, but its conflicts were safer from behind the walls and parapets of their forts, with an intervening river, than in dangerous charges against the muzzles of our guns! As soon as the cannonade re-commenced, it was immediately returned by a few discharges from the eighteen-pounders and six-pounder-howit-

zer; and the voice of our guns once more exhilerated the men, though their shots were ineffectual. Both batteries ceased firing simultaneously, and our indefatigable soldiers again set to work on the defences, completed the ramparts, and made rapid progress in the construction of a bomb-proof and traverse in rear of the postern.

These were anxious days and hours for a garrison short of ammunition, assailed by an enemy equipped with every species of deadly missile, probably surrounded by superior numbers concealed on the left bank of the river, and yet forced to labor on the very fortifications which were to keep off the foe. During all this time, however, no one desponded. Day and night they toiled incessantly on the works amid the shower of shot and bombs, nor was a sound of sorrow heard within the little fort until its brave commander fell, mortally wounded by a shell, on the 6th of May. The game was kept up during all this day; mounted men were seen along the prairie, while infantry were noticed creeping through the thickets; but a few rounds of canister, from Bragg's battery, dispersed the assailants.

About four o'clock of this day a white flag was observed at some old buildings in the rear of our work, and a parley was sounded by the enemy. Two officers were soon descried approaching us, and an equal number were despatched by Captain Hawkins, (who had succeeded Major Brown in the command of the fort,) to meet them within two hundred and fifty yards of our lines. A communication from General Arista was delivered by the herald, and the Mexicans were requested to retire a short distance and await the reply.

In this document Arista declared that our fort was surrounded by forces adequate to its capture, while a numerous division, encamped in the neighborhood, was able to keep off all succors that might be expected. He alleged that his

respect for humanity urged him to mitigate as much as possible the disasters of war, and he therefore summoned our garrison to surrender, in order to avoid by capitulation, the entire destruction of the command. This mingled mission of humanity and revenge demanded the immediate notice of our troops, and, accordingly, a brief council was held in which it was unanimously resolved to decline the philanthropic proposal. Hawkins, at once despatched his courteous but firm reply, and the enemy acknowledged its receipt by a storm of shot and shell which was literally showered into the works.

It would be but repeating a narrative of one day's scenes were we to detail the events of the 7th, 8th and 9th of May. The bravado contained in Arista's despatch, had failed in its effort to intimidate us; nevertheless we were compelled to undergo the severest task that a soldier can suffer in passive non-resistance, whilst the enemy, from afar, strove to bury our fort under the weight of their projectiles. Bombs and shot were, however, unavailing. The defences proved equal to our perfect protection; and all continued to work cheerfully in the trenches until the distant sounds of battle were heard booming from Palo Alto and Resaca. Anxiety was dispelled, and hope ripened into certainty as the cannonade grew louder and drew nearer the river, until, at last, on the evening of the ninth, the Mexican squadrons raced past the fort and received the reserved shot of the eighteens which poured their masses of grape among the flying groups. As our pursuing forces rushed out from behind the thickets and beheld the American flag still aloft in the works, they sent forth a cheer which was answered by the rejoicing garrison, and the valley of the Rio Grande reverberated with the exultation of delight. Victory and relief; a routed foe and succored friends, enlivened every heart, and even the

foremost and bitterest in pursuit halted a moment to exchange congratulations upon the events of the glorious day.

Thus the separate forces of the United States were again brought together; and FORT BROWN,—which now received its name from the brave Major who died on the 9th,—was found to have lost but two by death and only fourteen wounded during the whole bombardment.

Every war produces its singular characters whose influence or example are not without their due effect upon the troops, and, at the conclusion of these chapters, which are so stained with blood and battle, it may not be useless to sketch, even upon the grave page of history, the deeds of a woman whose courageous spirit bore her through all the trials of this bombardment, but whose masculine hardihood was softened by the gentleness of a female heart. Woman has every where her sphere of power over the rougher sex, but the women of a camp must possess qualities to which their tender sisters of the saloon are utter strangers.

Some years ago, in the far west, a good soldier joined one of our regiments, with his tall and gaunt wife, whose lofty figure and stalwart frame almost entitled her as much as her husband to a place in the ranks of the gallant seventh. Unwilling to abandon her liege lord upon his enlistment, this industrious female was immediately employed as one of the laundresses, three of whom are allowed to draw rations in each company, and are required to wash for the soldiers at a price regulated by a council of officers. The "Great Western,"—for by this soubriquet was she known in the army,—arrived at Corpus Christi with her husband, and up to the period of our departure for the Rio Grande performed all her appropriate duties, keeping, in addition, a "mess" for the younger officers of the regiment. When the army

advanced, the women, with some exceptions, were despatched by sea to Point Isabel, while a few procured ponies to follow the soldiers in their tedious march. The husband of the Great Western was sent in one of the transports to the Brazos, but his hardy spouse did not deign to accompany him in this comfortable mode of transit, declaring that "the boys of her mess must have some one to take care of them on their toilsome march." Accordingly, having purchased a cart and loaded it with luggage, cooking utensils, and supplies, she mounted behind her donkey with whip in hand, and displayed during the wearisome advance, qualities which the best teamster in the train might have envied. Throughout the whole journey she kept her boarders well provided with excellent rations; and, when her brigade reached the banks of the Colorado she was one of the first who offered to cross in the face of the resisting enemy. After calmly surveying the scene, which has been described in another chapter, she remarked, with great coolness, that "if the general would give her a stout pair of tongs she would wade the river and whip every scoundrel Mexican that dared show his face on the opposite side!"

When Taylor marched to Point Isabel on the 1st of May, the Great Western was of course left behind with the seventh infantry. Together with the eight or ten women who remained, she moved, at once into the fort, where her mess was soon re-established in a tent near the centre of the works. The enemy's fire began on the 3d, as she was commencing her preparations for breakfast, and the women were, of course, immediately deposited for safety in the almost vacant magazines. But it may be recorded to their honor that they were not idle during the siege. Nobly did they ply their needles in preparing sand bags from the soldiers' and officers' tents to strengthen the works and protect the

artillerists whilst serving at their guns; yet, the Great Western, declining either to sew or to nestle in the magazine, continued her labors over the fire in the open air. After the discharge of the first gun all were at their posts, answering the shot from the Mexican forts; and, when the hour for breakfast arrived, none expected the luxury that awaited them. Nevertheless the *mess* was as well attended as if nothing but a morning drill, with blank cartridges, had occurred, and, in addition, a large supply of delicious coffee awaited the thirsty, who had but to come and partake, without distinction of rank. To some of the artillerists who were unable to leave their guns, the beverage was carried by this excellent female; and, as may readily be believed, no *belle* of Orleans, ever met a more gracious reception. The fire of the artillery was kept up almost incessantly until near the dinner hour, when the Great Western again provided a savory soup which she distributed to the men without charge.

Thus did she continue to fulfil her duties during the seven days that the enemy kept up an incessant cannonade and bombardment. She was ever to be found at her post; her meals were always ready at the proper hour, and always of the best that the camp afforded. When the despatches, sent by Walker, were made up for General Taylor on the evening of the 4th, a number of officers and men wrote to their friends at Point Isabel; and among them this courageous woman found time to communicate with her husband who had not been despatched from the depot to Fort Brown. In this document she expressed her full confidence in the ability of the garrison to sustain itself, and only regretted the absence of her spouse. To supply his place, however, she applied, early in the action, for a musket and ammunition which she placed in security, expressing her determina-

tion to have full satisfaction whenever the enemy dared to approach within range of her piece. This they never did, and our indomitable heroine must rest contented with the reflection that she nobly performed her duty, and will long be remembered by the besieged garrison of Fort Brown.

NOTE.—The reader who desires to verify the accounts of the actions narrated in the two last chapters, will find all the authentic papers upon which they are founded, in the national documents relative to the war published during the two sessions of the twenty-ninth congress.

It will be observed that the name of General Worth does not occur in the account of these recent transactions on the Rio Grande. This excellent soldier had left Florida in September, 1845, and was early on the ground at Corpus Christi in command of the first brigade consisting of one artillery battalion and the eighth regiment of infantry. His march and acts on the Rio Grande have been recounted in the preceding chapters; but soon after his arrival he received the mortifying intelligence that he had been superceded in rank by an arrangement announced from the war department. He, therefore, deemed it due to himself as an officer to demonstrate his sensibility by resigning at once, especially as he was convinced that there would be no engagement between the armies, and that the war would be concluded by despatches and bulletins instead of arms. Nevertheless he left the American camp with regret, (tendering his services "out of authority," to the general in command,) and travelled with despatch to Washington. On arriving there he learned that hostilities had actually commenced; and waiving all his personal feeling, he immediately withdrew his resignation, with a request for permission to return forthwith to the command of the troops from which he was separated, by army orders, in April, 1846. His wish was granted by the secretary of war as soon as it was made known on the 9th of May, and Worth hastened back to Mexico, where his bravery and skill were subsequently so conspicuous.—See Niles's Register, vol. 70, p. 313.